Product Close Up: Trinity Cymbals and Dialtune Snares

MODERN DRUMMER

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JUNE 2024

Weezer's
Patrick Wilson

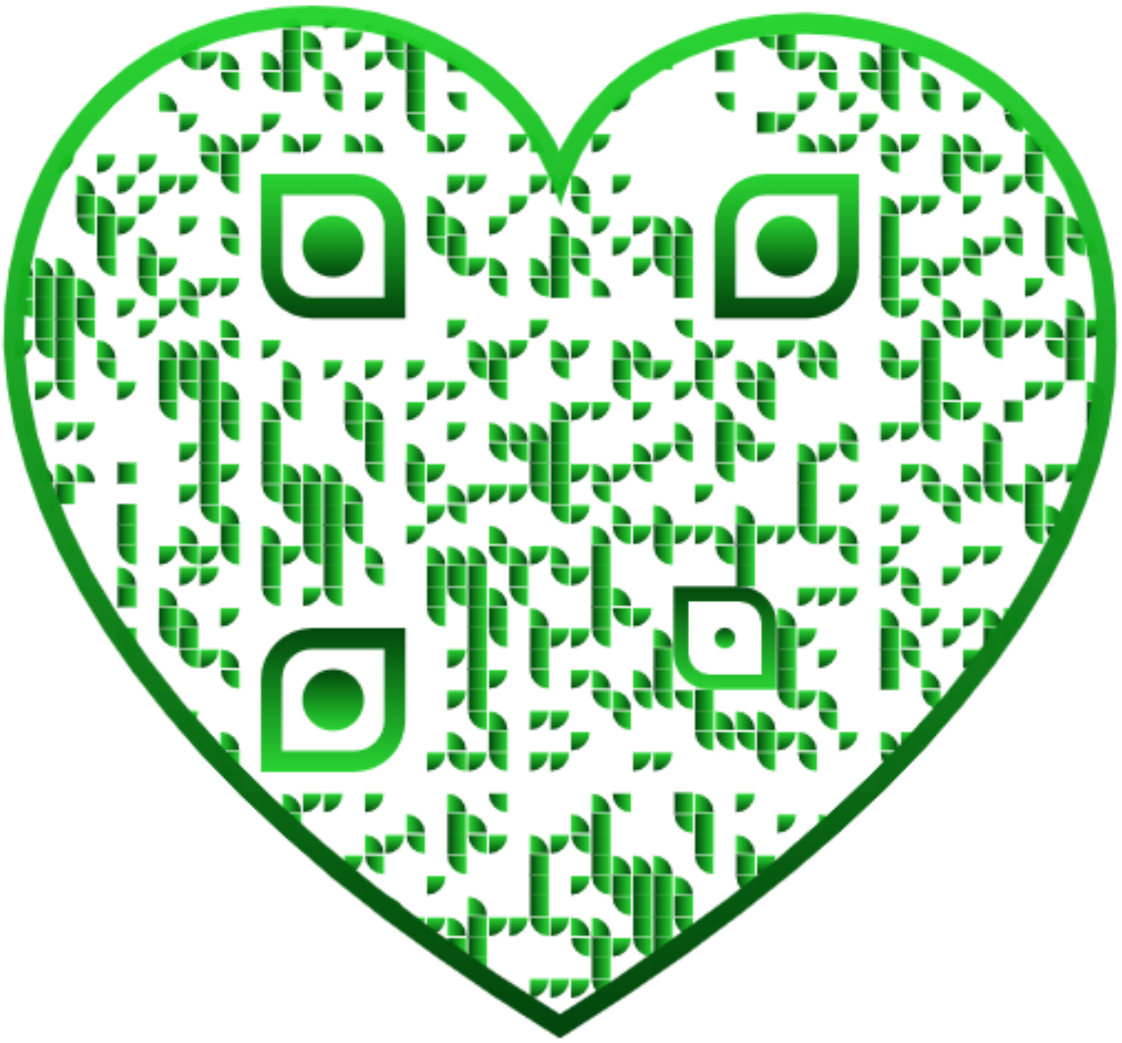
Matchbox Twenty and Liz Phair's
Neal Daniels

LA Jazz drummer/educator
Tina Raymond

Whom Gods Destroy's
Bruno Valverde

Learn from:
Morello, Rondinelli, Packer, and Lesso

Exclusive James Brown Transcription



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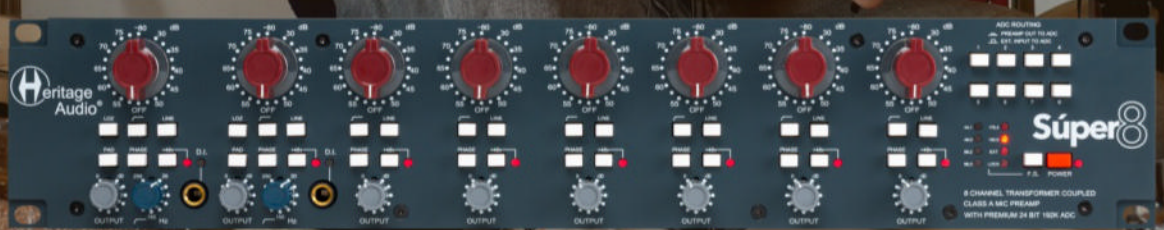

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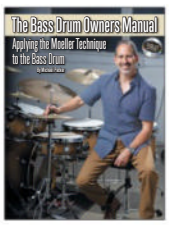

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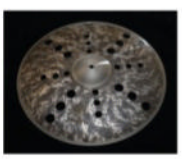

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Community, Scene

It's a subject that comes up often in my interviews— Being part of a community or a scene, and I can't stress its importance enough! All drummers (should) know about how supportive the drum community is for one another. It's a unique brotherhood that (in my opinion) is not replicated by any other group of instrumentalists. If you have your doubts, go to one of the many drum shows around the world, or read an interview in *Modern Drummer*, and become instantly convinced. We drummers *are* a different breed.

Hopefully everyone out there has a "drum buddy." That might be another drummer, drum teacher, or an employee at a local music store. Being an active part in the drum community is important. If you are an older drummer, seek out some younger drummers (and musicians) and mentor them. Offer some help, advice, or wisdom. Maybe even hire them for your band. If you are a younger drummer (or other musician) seek out some "old pros" for guidance, tips, and wisdom. Ask any successful drummer if they had an important musical mentor along the way— I guarantee you they have. They will also tell you that some of the *best* musical education that they got, was through playing with musicians that were older than themselves.

The next time you see your favorite drummer play, hang around after the show (you won't be the only one.) Tell them how much they have inspired you and thank them for their inspiration and hard work. Ask them a question, offer to help them carry or pack their drums, you might wind up with a lifelong drum buddy, and get a nice lesson out of the experience.

In today's world, communities are fracturing and disappearing everywhere, and that's not good! Communities support one another in many ways. Emotionally, financially, and with collective wisdom and creativity. Being an artist, musician, or creative person in today's world is hard enough, but doing it alone is impossible. There is real strength in numbers. As a musician, become an active member in your local musical community. Support other musicians, venues, and music stores. Go to gigs, hang out after gigs, go to recitals at local colleges and churches, buy a snare drum head at a local shop, become a part of the scene. Get out of your practice room, off your phone, and TALK to each other. It's not just networking for future gigs, or finding musicians for your new band, its being part of your musical community. There are tons of benefits and no risks.

Reach out to other artistic communities too. Other musicians, actors, visual artists, dancers, writers, and even cooks aren't as different from us drummers as you might think. The more you reach out and build communities, the more opportunities there are to collaborate, and the more opportunities to collaborate, the more chances there are to support, learn, and work.

Each one, teach one,
Mark Griffith
Editor-in-Chief, Director of Content

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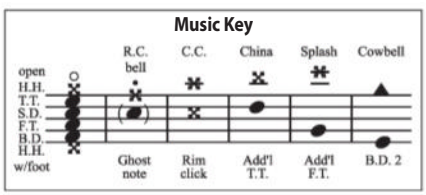

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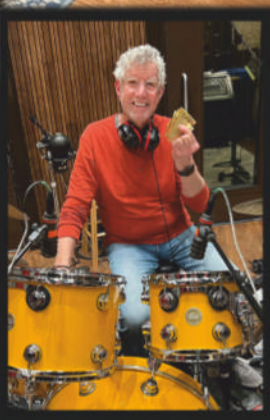

Dennis Holt is one of Nashville's most gifted musicians, whose drumming abilities cross nearly every genre from Americana to Country to Rock, Jazz, Ambient and R & B. Seasoned global performer, Dennis' diversity has proven itself in recording with Taylor Swift, AD/Kansas, Emmylou Harris, Trisha Yearwood, and Deniece Williams to name but a few.

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Shelly and his Mannerisms

By Kevin van den Elzen

This month's column is written by Kevin van den Elzen who hails from the Netherlands and now makes his home in Los Angeles. Kevin received his master's degree at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California while studying there with me. He often subs for me in town with various big bands and has become known as a foremost big band drumming archivist and analyst. He co-leads a big band with pianist Josh Nelson, and the two of them began hosting an internet interview series several years ago called West Coast Jazz Hour. Kevin and I share a love for "West Coast Jazz," and the drumming contributions made by Shelly Manne. I recently wrote about some newly discovered tapes of Shelly Manne and his Men in these pages; this month's article completes the discussion circle, highlighting what I feel to be some of the best Shelly Manne on record. Take it away, Kevin!

— ***Peter Erskine***

I recently spoke with my mentor, Peter Erskine, about the Stan Kenton Orchestra. Peter played with the Kenton band from 1972 to 1975. He mentioned that drummers like Stan Levey and Mel Lewis are given the preponderance of credit for being Kenton's most-swinging drummers in those formative years of the band in the 1950s. Someone who is often overlooked is Shelly Manne, to the dismay of his late widow Flip Manne (who lived to be 102 years old). She spoke with Peter expressing her frustration that Shelly wasn't given more credit for swinging.

Shelly Manne joined the Kenton band in early 1946 and left on two occasions: the first time complaining that the band did not swing enough, and the second time (in 1951) to establish himself on the West Coast as part of the burgeoning jazz scene taking place in southern California. The first recording that Shelly made with Kenton, "Artistry in Rhythm," included a solo showcase crafted especially for him by Kenton staff writer Pete Rugolo, titled "Artistry in Percussion." This featured Shelly using mallets on the drumkit for the opening thematic statement, foreshadowing his penchant for finding and exploiting different colors at the drums.

I've been transcribing and diving deep into the drummers and music of the West Coast. I learned about many amazing recordings created on the West Coast that are slept on. Some of the drummers who could be considered among the most swinging, tasteful and hip players from the West Coast scene are Larry Bunker, Nick Ceroli, Stan Levey, Frank Butler, Jack Sperling, Mel Lewis (during the 50's,) Lawrence Marable, Frank Capp, Earl Palmer, but also Shelly Manne! If you're not familiar with these names, check them out.

I believe that Shelly didn't get his full credit, in part, because of his studio work. He switched in his career multiple times from doing studio work to going on the road with his band. The remarkable thing about Shelly is that his vocabulary is some of the hippest I have ever heard. You can hear a bunch of influences and twists in the trades that he plays on this fantastic recording of "Moose The Mooche" (from the Contemporary label album *More Swinging Sounds.* You can hear shades of Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, some Gene Krupa, and there are even displays of linear drumming that you would hear later by the funksters Mike Clark and David Garibaldi. Shelly also experimented with creating different sounds on the drums by playing with his hands, changing pitches with pushing the stick into the skin, cross stick phrases, buzz strokes etc. He was able to put all of these creative tools in his playing and to create an incredibly hip and melodic but logical-sounding vocabulary.

The first set of trades, starts with one of his trademark licks, a typical bebop lick of two eighth notes, followed by one set of triplets into one quarter note. He plays this as a cross rhythm. The third and fourth bars are an answering phrase to the first two bars. He then finishes it with playing the same bebop triplet lick in a slight variation over the drums followed by triplets in groups of four notes. He plays his signature lick on recordings such as: "The King Swings" on the album *Checkmate* and "Blu Gnu" from *Plays Peter Gunn*.

R L R R L R
L R R L R R R
5
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
straight
5
straight
6
R R L R R L R R L
L R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

In following example, Shelly plays a really hip idea in the second to last bar that I believe are played with single strokes. I can relate it to what Max Roach would do, playing melodic single stroke phrases in triplets, but Shelly turns the rhythm into sixteenth notes. He plays it also as a six note grouping. Making the hi-hat being the centre, going to the high tom (with the right hand) and snare (with the left hand,) is an unusual, but challenging and extremely hip idea, and a really nice example of Shelly's creativity. In an interview with radio jazz-show host Sleepy Stein, Shelly once said this about his own drumming and the inevitable comparison to Max: "Max plays melodically from the rhythms he plays. I play rhythms from thinking melodically."

It's safe to say that Shelly was a man that was ahead of his time. He becomes looser in later recordings, becoming bolder with his phrasing. This was a trend that was really set in motion by Elvin Jones, but Shelly was youthful and hip enough to pick up on it. Shelly maintains the beautiful tone and touch that he got out of the drums throughout his career; incredibly warm, with clarity and depth.

Kevin van den Elzen is a jazz drummer and bandleader originally from the Netherlands who works and resides in Los Angeles. Kevin has worked with musicians such as John Clayton, Dick Oatts, Bob Mintzer, Larry Carlton, the New York Voices, Bob Sheppard, Dianne Reeves, Gerald Clayton, Anthony Wilson, Nick Mancini, Josh Nelson, John Beasley and many others.

He is an active big band drummer in the LA area and has performed with big bands of Dave Slonaker, Clare Fischer led by Brent Fischer, Danny Jonokuchi, Teryn Re, Dave Richards, Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Paradox Jazz Orchestra (NL) and the Quincy Jones All Star Orchestra led by John Clayton.

Kevin graduated from the Amsterdam Conservatory in 2014 and did his master studies with Peter Erskine, Ndugu Chancler, Roy McCurdy, and Aaron Serfaty at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California in 2017. He is now on faculty at the Orange County High School for the Arts.

Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com

Let the "Good Times Roll"

This month's *Modern Drummer* Kit of the Month comes to us from Bryan Beyer. He built this 70s Slingerland kit for his Cars tribute band called Moving in Stereo. The drums are 14x24, 10x14, 14x14, 14x16, and 16x16 shells that he collected over the years. Bryan rewrapped the drums in Jammin' Sam Chrome to mimic David Robinson's classic kit from his time playing in The Cars. The set is augmented with Slingerland timbales, a 6.5" Ludwig Supra, and Zildjian and Sabian cymbals. Bryan can create some of those cool David Robinson electronic sounds thanks to a sample pad and some additional pads and triggers. That kit is *just what we needed!* Thanks Bryan.

NEW and NOTABLE

Latin Percussion's 60th Anniversary Cowbell, Jam Block, Cabasa, and Vibra-Slap III

To commemorate sixty amazing years Latin Percussion (LP) has expanded its much-loved percussion range with the addition of the 60th Anniversary Ridge Rider Cowbell, Jam Block, Afuche / Cabasa and newly updated Vibra-Slap III. The updated **Vibra-Slap III** is made using LP's proprietary Jenigor, a nearly unbreakable plastic which has been used in Jam Blocks for decades. The latest version features a new 'Strike Zone' which allows the instrument to be played by hand or drumstick. LP's second patent, the Afuche / Casaba has become an indispensable percussion instrument. The 60th Anniversary **Afuche / Cabasa** is black emblazoned with the red LP60 logo. The 60th Anniversary Limited Edition **Rock Ridge-Rider Cowbell** is made in the U.S.A., chrome-plated, and retains all the innovative spirit of its predecessor. This special version is fitted with a Jenigor ridge to dampen overtones and help prevent denting when playing. The upgraded 60th Anniversary **Jam Block** is crafted from Jenigor, a virtually indestructible plastic made to the company's own formulation and emblazoned with a red foil LP60 logo. To find out more about the LP 60th Anniversary events and products, please go to **lpmusic.com/**

Sabian Introduces Stratus Series Line Extentions

Sabian is proud to announce the release of three new products to the Stratus cymbal series: the 10" Stratus Splash, the 12" Stratus Ciro Stax, and the Stratus Promotional Set. These new line extensions add further color, sounds, and dynamics to this already popular cymbal series. "The 10" Stratus Splash has a larger than normal bell and thin weight, giving it a fast attack and quick decay." says SABIAN's Head of Research and Development, Randy Ross. He says further, "The 12" Stratus Cirro Stax comprises of two cymbals, creating a sharp staccato sound reminiscent of digital samples used in the 80s and 90s." The third product in this release is a Promotional Set, consisting of 14" hi-hats, 16" & 18" crashes, and a 20" ride, providing even more value to this budget conscious series. All three products are shipping now. For additional information visit: **https://sabian.com/cymbals/?sort-by=new-releases&product-category%5B%5D=drumset**

Lauten Audio Announces Condenser Mic For Toms

Lauten Audio announces the launch of Tom Mic – the world's first large-diaphragm FET condenser microphone built explicitly for use on toms. Tom Mic has a tailored frequency response attuned to toms and utilizes Lauten Audio's newly designed Supercardioid capsule and powerful dual-bias circuitry, providing up to 28dB of off-axis rejection. The result is crisp, high-definition sounds with minimal cymbal bleed for professional, mix-ready sounds on the stage and in the studio. Tom Mic is available now for $398 US Street / MSRP $549. For more information and to purchase Tom Mic, go to **.lautenaudio.com/tom-mic**

PDP Launches 25th Anniversary Clear Acrylic Kit and Snare

Pacific Drums and Percussion (PDP) celebrates its 25th Anniversary with the launch of the limited-edition Clear Acrylic Kit and Snare Drum. The limited edition 4-piece 25th Anniversary Clear Acrylic Kit consisting of a 16 x 22" kick, 16 x 16" floor tom with 7 x 10" and 8 x 12" mounted toms features seamless, high-quality acrylic shells that offer a dazzling transparent aesthetic under stage lighting. In addition, these drums are fitted with walnut stained hoops which add a throaty element to the trademark fat attack and focused tone of acrylic shells.

The 25th Anniversary Clear Acrylic Kit is complemented by the 6.5 x 14" 25th Anniversary Clear Acrylic Snare. Like the kit, this drum is a special fusion of a seamless acrylic shell, walnut stained hoops with a commemorative badge. To find out more about the PDP 25th Anniversary Clear Acrylic Kit and Snare and all the other PDP drums and accessories, visit **pacificdrums.com/** or look for **#TeamPacficDrums** on social channels.

Trinity 18" Heavy Holey Crash

Trinity Cymbals are HEAVY

By Brian Hill

Trinity Cymbals have been around for several years. However, the cymbals themselves seem much older than the U.S. distribution that brings them to us today. Trinity Cymbals was officially founded in 2019 in Weaverville, CA, in a private music shop. Ownership was swiftly transferred to the Canales Music Management Group, the parent company of Trinity Cymbals. Both companies are headed by CEO, Robert Rodriguez, and COO Lynn Edwards, who moved the company to the East Coast.

Robert's resume' in music, drumming, and management, combined with Mrs. Edwards laser focus in navigating the behind-the-scenes details enhances the growth and strength for the operational tempo of the company. They work hand-in-hand to make this partnership an ideal choice to bring these very impressive cymbals to the U.S. market.

Trinity Cymbals is very proud to fly under the moniker of "Veteran Owned and Operated." (Yes, Mr. Rodriguez is a seriously educated and experienced former Marine.) To add to this powerful

mix is the fact that the company has a second moniker. This company is proud that it is also a "Women Owned Business." Both Robert Rodriguez and Lynn Edwards co-own Trinity Cymbals.

Robert told me that "In a short period of time, Trinity Cymbals has provided cymbals which have graced stages around the world with Trinity endorsed Danny Couto, percussionist with the Latin metal band, Ill Nino. Trinity also endorses legendary drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, who plays the Bernard Purdie Signature Series. Mr. Purdie will be performing in Japan at Billboard Live 2024 in June for a total of seven shows this year." And Trinity cymbals have made their way onto CMT with Chris Jansen & Bret Michaels in this past year, and Trinity is also played behind Bret Michaels when his band hits the stage. Trinity Cymbals was also honored to sponsor the second stage backline for the band Hatebreed. I've been checking out Trinity cymbals at some of the East Coast drum shows and I really liked what they had to offer with their impressive selection of cymbals.

Trinity Cymbals are hand-crafted in the Shandong Province of China, where the Chinese cymbal- smiths have been perfecting the craft for over 1000 years. This particular collection of craftsmen has been hand-crafting bronze cymbals since 1949, using the best metal alloys available. In this case, the cymbals are made of the B20 alloy. Trinity sent *Modern Drummer* an 18" Heavy Holey Crash to "crash-test!" So, let the whacking, (or crashing) begin.

Obviously from it's name, this is an 18" diameter crash cymbal with a bunch of holes! In fact, there are 24 of them. There are twelve one inch and twelve three quarter inch diameter holes arranged in groups of three, each in an alternating pattern. The gauge of the cymbal is quite thick, making for a heavy plate. While the bottom side of the cymbal is fully lathed, the top is mostly left in a "raw" state, only the bell and edge are visually lathed. While visually appealing, this combination certainly adds to, and positively affects, the sound and performance of the crash.

So, it looks cool, but what about the sound? In my opinion, the name of the cymbal understates the versatility of what I experienced. This cymbal is a bit of a "Godsend," (get it? Holey!) Its musical qualities are just fantastic and very versatile. I found that it blends perfectly with a wide variety of different cymbals and alloys. It also blends in sonically with a wide variety of musical styles as well. A lot of what you get sound-wise, comes from how you use it.

This cymbal has everything. Its sound is clean, but, at the same time, trashy. It has a punch, but is, open, airy, and shimmering. It has a great "ping" while providing a serious "wash," with a nice decay. It can be quite loud and very sensitive as well. It's called a crash cymbal, but I found it works well as an alternative ride cymbal. The bell is clean and penetrating, but soft mallets make for great crescendos. It also makes for a good effects cymbal so if space is an issue, this one could take the place of a China cymbal as well. Again, different implements will give you a wide berth in sound creation. I'll describe it as having, "Big powerful tone with dynamic harmonics." This one's a winner!

The Trinity Heavy Series provides a full line of Splashes, Crashes, Hi-Hats, and Ride cymbals ranging in sizes from 8 to 22 inches. Other Trinity Cymbal lines include the Dark, Low Volume, Brilliant, Session, Projection, and Essence Series. The Bernard "Pretty" Purdie Series is available as a special pre-order only.

Every cymbal I tried at the Trinty booth sounded great, but I must admit, I am really glad they sent us the 18" Holey Crash because I thought it was a "stand-out" instrument among the crowd. If you're looking for a high-end, versatile cymbal that's a bit different, this is one to take a good listen too. So, get a stick and give one a good "whack!" You'll probably like it! On-line pricing: $400.00. Check 'em out: **trinitycymbals.com**

Dialtune Snare Drums

Premium Snare, New Lower Price

By Jason Mehler

If you haven't seen or heard about Dialtune by now, you must've been living under a rock. Dialtune is an innovative drum company that has made headlines over the past few years for their patented cable tuning system for drums that allows a drummer to quickly tune both top and bottom drumheads independently of each other. The Dialtune system also allows drummers to replace their drumheads very quickly.

In the four years since the February 2020 *Modern Drummer* review of the Dialtune maker's series maple snare drum, the company has made several changes and improvements, which we will explore in this month's Product Close-Up.

The Drums

We were provided two beautiful Dialtune snare drums for this review. The first is a 6.5x14 eight-ply 100% North American Maple snare drum in a Matte Black finish and the other drum is a 6.5x14 Black Nickel-Over-Brass. Both drums are fitted with Evans coated batter heads and Evans single-ply resonant heads.

Patented Cable Tuning System

The tuning system features diecast metal lugs with embedded pullies, independent tuning dials for top and bottom heads, high-strength synthetic fiber cables, and quick release hoops.

Changes and Improvements

The changes to the product, according to Dialtune founder Bryan Bedson, were aimed at maintaining or improving the quality of the product, while also reducing the cost to the consumer. "The goal is to make Dialtune drums more accessible to the average drummer".

Among the changes they made are:

- Stiffer Dial for better tuning retention
- Stronger synthetic fiber cable, pre-stretched & tested over 500lb
- Maple shells are now made to spec for Dialtune, improving quality control
- Re-designed snare bed profile for greater sensitivity and response
- Replaced the Mag Throw-Off with a high-quality l lever throw-off
- Replaced Puresound speed wires with standard brass snare wires
- Swapped Remo for Evans heads
- Streamlined manufacturing process to bring down cost to consumer
- Branding badge removed from outer shell
- Logo embossed into tuning dial

Build Quality

These drums are hefty! They each weigh around 23lb. They are not the heaviest snares, but they certainly do compete. However, there is a good reason for that. I dismantled the drum, removing the lugs and found that each of the components are extremely well-crafted and durable. The lugs are embedded with precision bearings and pullies, designed to provide frictionless motion for the Kevlar cable. The dial itself is also heavy when removed. It all feels very well-made and looks fantastic. The throw-off works smoothly, and I feel it's a good compromise to bring the price within reason.

Set Up

The Dialtune drums will work with most of the stronger snare stands. However, some stands may not be strong enough or may not expand enough to properly secure the drum. Therefore, Dialtune recommends the following snare stands:

• DW 9000 Heavy Duty Double Braced Tom/ Snare Stand
• Pearl S-1030 Snare Stand
• Tama HS80LOW Road Pro Snare Stand - Low Profile

Sound Quality

I was impressed that the heavy hardware did not deaden the sound. Both drums have characteristics that you would expect from their individual shell type.

The Nickel Over Brass snare is bright and pronounced, with plenty of body. The snare wires are extremely responsive, producing distinct, articulate ghost notes that contrast the full-bodied accents and rimshots. Playing cross-stick, I found an amazing sweet spot that really had the whole drum singing.

The Maple snare produced similar results as far as snare response and cross-stick. The drum is very versatile, sounding great across the tuning spectrum, however, the drum really shined for me at low tunings. I love the warm snare thud with a clean decay when the heads are tuned down.

Tuning the Drum

The tuning system works incredibly well due to the pulleys and bearings. There is constant, even tension on the head as you turn the dial. Tapping the drumhead around the edges produces the same pitch around the entire drum.

I can't say enough about the ease of tuning the Dialtune snares and the ability to tune the heads separately. I've been playing drums for over 40 years, and yes, I can tune drums, but I feel like most drummers avoid experimenting with different tunings, due to the difficulty and time consumption of tuning the top and bottom heads.

With the Dialtune drums, it's so easy to try different combinations of tensions and produce completely different sounds. Eventually, you learn what works and you can apply that knowledge when tuning your other drums.

Replacing the Cable

According to Dialtune, it is not likely that a cable will snap from regular use. However, If you're like me, you'll probably show everybody how cool it is to tune the drum with a dial. Therefore, having the extra cable may come in handy. I removed the cable and replaced it for testing purposes. There is a bit of a learning curve, but it got easier after a few minutes.

Other Interesting Features

One strange thing that I noticed was that there were breather holes distributed evenly around drum, about ¾ inch from the bottom bearing edge. I asked Bryan about those, and he laughed a little, telling me that originally it was a mistake, but after some thought, they liked the idea of the air escaping evenly towards the bottom of the drum, rather than being forced out of one centralized breather whole.

Helpful Tips

In testing the drums, I found a few tips & tricks that may help others:

• Dial Tension – If the dial tension is too tight, you can adjust that by removing the entire dial mechanism from the shell and adjusting the three set screws on the back of the dial housing to give it a little more play.
• Drumheads – If the rim doesn't slide into place, loosen the dial a bit more. You can also tug on the cable, it's easy.
• When changing the bottom head, your best option is to remove both snare straps. This will save you some time.
• Muffling – Since Dialtune drums retain an even tension on the head, you may need to resort to external mufflers for dampening rather than uneven tension rods.

Conclusion

One only must look at a picture of a Dialtune drum to know that the company means business. Now that I've had the chance to try them out, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend hunting down a Dialtune drum for testing or purchase. Especially at the more competitive price. I'm excited to see what's next from Dialtune. The Maple Matte Black is $599.00 and Black Nickel Brass retails for $799.00. Check them out at: **dialtunedrums.com/**

Patrick Wilson

Ergo Fuego, I Just Want to Play!

By Mark Griffith

Weezer's Patrick Wilson is a drummer just like many of us reading this article right now. He *loves* Rush and Van Halen. He says things like, "I buy so much gear based on demos that I see online, and then I get it home and wonder why I can't play like the guy who did the demo." Then he utters the thought that drummers like Bill Stewart and Jojo Mayer have him thinking about "taking some more lessons." Then he openly admits, "If I hadn't found Rivers Cuomo (Weezer's lead singer and songwriter) I might be playing in a jam band somewhere and just telling people how cool the band Polytown is."

But Patrick *did* meet fellow music lover and songwriter Rivers Cuomo and together they have guided Weezer through 30 years of success and hits. And in the end, Patrick says it all when he says repeatedly (in that laid back California drawl,) "Man, I just wanna play!" On the cusp of Weezer's new *Voyage to the Blue Planet* tour that will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the classic *Blue Album*, Patrick is fulfilling a boyhood dream of appearing on the cover of *Modern Drummer,* and he has a lot to share with us.

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MD: How did you get started playing drums?
PW: My friend in 8th grade named Greg Czarnecky had moved to Buffalo from Capistrano in Southern California, at the time I was reentering the public school system and we were both kind of new. We became friends, and he had a Ruther drum kit in the corner of his room that he hadn't set up yet. Ruther was a super low budget kit, but we set it up and we started getting into drums. I just loved playing it, so we both went to the same drum teacher, who was a great player in Buffalo with insane chops named John Fatta. We took a lot of lessons from him but looking back I wish I had practiced more.
MD: What kind of stuff was he teaching you?
PW: Reading, rudiments, the traditional stuff. He was great because he would write things out. I remember his notation and script was so distinctive, I wish I still had one of my notebooks where he wrote everything out. Those notebooks wound up being a book after a while and a lot of lessons. We got up to starting to get into Jim Chapin's *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* which is (as you know) an insane book. I had already learned some Van Halen and Zeppelin songs and I told him that I wanted to party more, and I was pretty cool with Van Halen and Zeppelin. I remember thinking, *"I got this."* But he was a good influence on both of us.
MD: Did you play in high school at all?
PW: No. But I loved music. I loved Rush, Van Halen, and Zeppelin so much. I had a rather strange early childhood, I had an older cousin who was seven years older than me, when I was 7 or 8, he was 14 or 15. He had me listening to Rush *2112*, the first Van Halen record, Aerosmith *Rocks*, and Gary Numan *The Pleasure Principle*. To this day, I love all those records, I never tired of that. At the same time my next-door neighbor was a more typical music consumer, and he was always telling me, "KISS is the best! Peter Criss is the best drummer in the world!" But then I would play him Rush *2112* and we would have arguments. Nothing against Peter Criss, *but c'mon*…
MD: That's not as strange as you might think. Many drummers I talk to say that they were turned on to great music by older brothers and sisters a little before we would have naturally found it. That seems to be how it worked back then.
PW: What's interesting is my teen aged kids are into music, and I often wonder if this is the only time in history where parents and kids are into the same music, it feels a little odd.
MD: How long had you been playing drums before you moved to California?
PW: I didn't even get a drum kit until I was 19, and I moved to Los Angeles-Hollywood when I was 21. My first kit was a Ludwig psychedelic red kit, but it was the early 70s (second) version when the color was not quite as blown out, it was more subtle.

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I stupidly left it in in the back of our car one night during rehearsal, I came out to a broken window and no drums, a total rookie mistake.

MD: As I have listened to Weezer throughout the years, I have always gotten the impression that you guys are real music lovers to the bone. Some people seem to love playing their instruments, and there are some people that seem to love playing music. That's why I loved (and miss) Taylor Hawkins so much. He had such a love of all music, not just the drums, but of MUSIC!

PW: Yeah, for sure! Taylor and I used talk and text about music all the time. He would send me clips of Gordon Lightfoot singing "Sundown" and Gary Wright playing "My Love is Alive" on a TV show playing the keytar.

We are all into the energy that a band can have. I think that's the classic tug of war in music. It's about the energy that a band can produce versus taking a songwriters view of things.

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MD: After being together for a long time and being lucky (and talented) enough to have a great deal of success, ALL bands evolve. But often the difficult thing is to retain an identifiable sound through that evolution. Therefore, after being together for 30+ years, how would you describe the sound of Weezer.

PW: There's a million Weezer's, but behind it all, we all came from rock 'n roll. Rivers loved KISS, I loved Rush and Van Halen, and (bassist) Scott Shriner is maybe a little bit more classic rock than us, he's really into The Small Faces and things from that era of music. But we all love all the same stuff, so Weezer is coming from the band ideal. We are all into the energy that a band can have. I think that's the classic tug of war in music. It's about the energy that a band can produce versus taking a songwriters view of things. Maybe that's why The Who is so amazing. Pete Townsend is a legitimately great songwriter. But he also wanted the cacophony and explosiveness of a band. With us, *Pinkerton* is our default sound, and to me *Pinkerton* sounds more like The Who. If you put us all in a room and said record something, it would sound like *Pinkerton*. But sometimes people don't want to hear "garagey explosiveness." That's when we focus it more, and then you get our songs like "Island in the Sun." That is a strange range of emotions though. When you get down to it, Weezer is (like you said) filled with guys who just love music.

When you get down to it, Weezer is filled with guys who just love music.

MD: That definitely comes out in like the cover stuff that you do and the *Teal Record* (which is a cover record.) When you guys did the covers record, or when you choose to cover a song, like you did with Toto's "Africa" what is the process of picking a tune?

PW: It has to do with what the singer is comfortable singing. We weren't gonna do Motorhead's "Ace of Spades." I mean we *could*, but if you see someone singing that and the singer isn't comfortable it's not going to work. So, it really comes down to whatever Rivers is comfortable singing. I really like how "Billie Jean" came out, that was a strange song to cover, but it came out cool.

I think the whole "Africa" thing started because some guy had posted a screenshot of him telling his neighbor to turn up the song "Africa" because he could hear it, and he loved the song. I think I retweeted something about loving the song "Africa." Then a girl on Twitter launched this giant campaign of how Weezer

needs to cover "Africa." Then on a lark I said (as kind of a joke) that first we would have to cover "Rosanna." From there, it really blew up and we knew that it would be good to take advantage of the whole thing. "Africa" got paired up with a bunch of other great songs that we grew up with, and we did the covers record which is the *Teal Album*. That's how that started, I'm super proud of "Africa" because there's no click on that track.

MD: Which is cool because the original main groove of the song is a loop.

PW: Yeah, that's right! I love that I didn't use a click for that record.

MD: What Weezer records are there clicks and what records don't have clicks?

PW: I'll tell you; *Blue Album* has a click; *Pinkerton* has no click. *Green Album* has a click, *Maladroit* no click. *Make Believe* has a click, *Red Album* no click…

MD: I think I can see a pattern.

PW: But luckily, I have figured out a way to make it greasy and keep it bouncy with the click.

There was always the idea that everyone on the radio was using a click so if we wanted radio play, we would have to use a click. However, I was always the guy saying, "No we don't. We

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don't *have* to do that!" It's not the click that's going to be the thing that makes it happen.

MD: It's the song! Now you are preparing for this tour, and you'll be playing the entire *Blue Album* in order. How has playing the music from the *Blue Album* evolved or changed since you recorded it 30 years ago?

PW: I think we can actually play it better now than we could back in the day, but it still feels fresh to me because the songs are so tight and there's no fat on them, so it's pretty easy. It's not that different now because we have been playing a lot of those songs anyway.

However, the way we rehearse now is different. Now we'll go to a small venue and ask if we can rehearse there, and the next day we'll do a show there. This time around we're doing it up in Santa Ana next week. It's a cool way to get the fans get pumped, some of them get to see it, and we get to see how everything flows. We already know how the *Blue Album* is gonna go over, so we're just gonna play it in order. But there's a bunch of B sides and other period stuff that we're going to add and see how they fit. It's still a process of discovery, which isn't that different from how it was in Hollywood back in the day, you never really knew if a song was going to work until you played it in front of people.

MD: Can you talk about those days when you guys were kicking around the club scene in Hollywood? You were there at such an interesting and transitionary point in music.

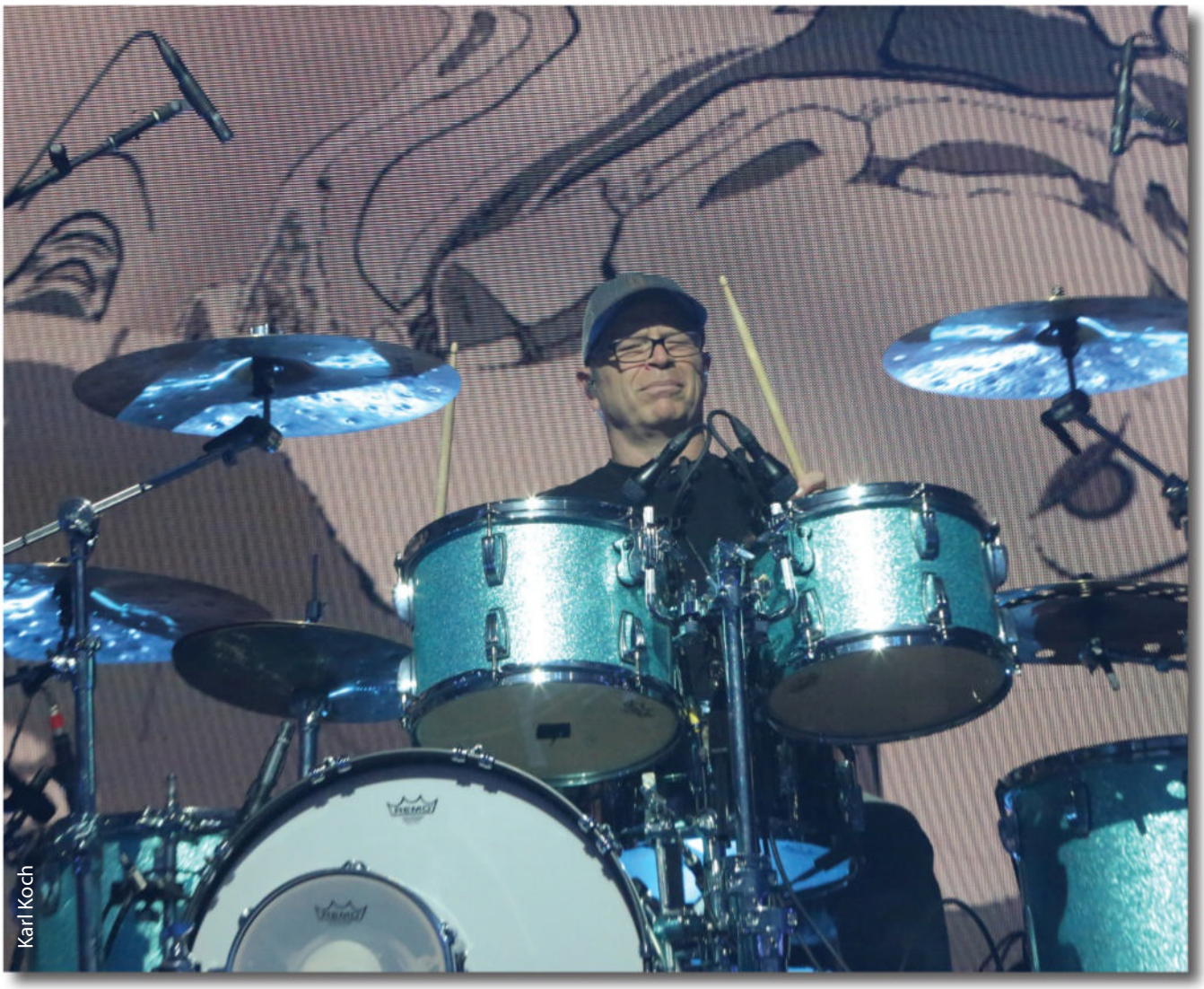
PW: When we got to Hollywood it was at the tail end of the hair band scene. I got there in 1990, and I think that summer was the very last hurrah for all those post Guns 'N Roses bands. It was insane because everybody on the street looked like they were in Guns 'N Roses. It was like cosplay, there was a lot of girls and they all looked like they were in a Whitesnake video, and all the dudes looked like Tommy Lee. Everyone was flyer-ing for their bands and by the end of the summer and the next year it was gone. It probably had to do with Nirvana, but West Hollywood had enough of all of it by that point, people were always making a mess, but the clubs were cool.

We played so many free shows, we weren't going to do the "sell tickets" stuff, so we played a lot of janky tiny places like Al's Bar and English Acid. At first it was always the same 10 people that would come see us, but if you keep plugging away you can build a following. But I think that's what's hard with kids now. "Rehearse?" *That sounds like work,* they don't think they need to do that because they have a cellphone that they can look at. But eventually cellphones will become uncool, and people will get sick of them.

We already know how the Blue Album is gonna go over, so we're just gonna play it in order. But there's a bunch of B sides and other period stuff that we're going to add and see how they fit.

MD: Through the years Weezer has worked with some of the all-time best producers, including Ric Ocasek (from The Cars) who produced three Weezer records. What did you guys learn from working with these producers?

PW: In the beginning we didn't really want a producer, we barely got onto a major label, we were sort of like an indie band with pretensions of becoming bigger. We had one foot on each side. The label said, "You gotta have producer," and to Rivers' credit, one day he heard "Just What I Needed" playing in a supermarket and he thought, "This is kind of what we're doing and what we want to do." So we wound up sending our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tape to Ric and he fell instantly in love with it. It was weird because those songs by The Cars are so good to this day they're just banging! I remember when he flew out to LA I had to go to Guitar Center on Sunset to get some sticks and I saw him, but I hadn't met him yet. He was just such a larger-than-life figure, but at the same time, a lovely man and such a nice, funny, and dry guy.

MD: There's lots of young bands out there that were probably a lot like Weezer thinking we don't need a producer, we're gonna do our own thing! And then someone at a label suggests or forces a producer on them. Can you talk about talk about that, and how Ric helped Weezer as a band?

PW: Ric was a perfect fit for us because we had nothing but intense and immense respect for him. Of course, we love The Cars, so when

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he would say something, it was so well received by us. He was so cool about producing us, he liked the music, and we were willing to listen to him. Honestly, his production style was that he just nudged us left and right. It wasn't like he was suggesting these huge chorus changes, it was more like, "Hey, maybe switch to the bridge pickup instead of the rhythm pickup," or, "Try playing this Les Paul Special on this tune instead."

MD: But sometimes those little details can make a huge effect on a song.

PW: When we first started rehearsing at SIR and recording at Electric Ladyland in New York we weren't using a click or anything. I remember that was around the time in the early 90s when there was a lot of like consternation about whether bands should we use a click or not. I hated using a click; but what I've come to realize now is this. You start out hating the click, then you realize that the click is great because you can hear how

tight everything sounds. Then you go beyond that and realize that through playing with the click and knowing how to do it, that you can sound that tight without a click. James Brown's band and records were way tighter than anything ever done with a click.

When we were working on the first record in the studio, it was all so new to us, we were so eager and earnest. I remember being (kind of) bummed when I listened back to the track "Undone" because we had done it with a click, and I had to admit that was tighter, so we did the whole record like that (with a click.) Then (of course) when we did the next record (*Pinkerton*) we were running full speed in the opposite direction, which is cool too.

MD: What I hope people are starting to realize is that a click is a tool that has its place, but it doesn't have to be used all the time and with all music.

PW: Agreed. It's hard to even compare today's era of music with the music that we grew up on. All the conditions are totally different, the incentives were different back then; except for the fact that we love playing. I marvel daily at the quality of the music that I grew up on, even more than I did when I was first hearing it. I wonder if anyone could create a track like The Who's "The Real Me" today? I don't know. But eventually people will have to get tired of Xanax-y dance beats, *right*?

> In the beginning we didn't really want a producer, we barely got onto a major label, we were sort of like an indie band with pretensions of becoming bigger.

MD: I think I think you picked the perfect example. There are modern bands that sound "like" Zeppelin or Black Sabbath, but have you ever heard a band that sounds even remotely like The Who? I haven't.

PW: I didn't see them with the classic lineup, but I'm told that when they were "on," that was it, that was the top.

MD: How did Weezer's work with Ric Ocasek progress and change as you did the three records with him?

PW: After the first record did so well, we (like a lot of young bands) wound up railing against

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our own success a little bit. We were thinking, "That's not us. We know what's us. We're going to show you. You're wrong." Rivers went back to school at Harvard and (I think) he was sort of wondering if he even wanted to continue. We had just done almost two years of touring in support of the first record, and everyone was burnt and not getting along, typical band stuff. Then we did one without Ric producing, and he came back for the *Green Album*. We were (sort of) reconvening as a band and we picked up right where we left off. He was still cool was just providing the same little nudges that he had before. That never changed, it was always cool working with him. One thing about Weezer is we always have great tunes. And when the tunes are great, they play themselves, you just don't want to get in the way. As a drummer, I just want the songs to feel good, I get super bummed if something gets chopped up and quantized. If you're going to do that, then just use the LinnDrum because that's a cool sound too. And then you don't need to listen to me complain.

> ...what I've come to realize now is this. You start out hating the click, then you realize that the click is great because you can hear how tight everything sounds. Then you go beyond that and realize that through playing with the click and knowing how to do it, that you can sound that tight without a click.

MD: While we're talking about great producers, what was it like working with Rick Rubin?

PW: I love Rick Rubin. He spent a ton of time with us. At the time, our whole energy wasn't jiving with each other as a band, but he did a great job of channeling us into something that could make sense. We spent a lot of time with him in the mountains of Malibu, some time with him in Hollywood, and Rivers actually wound up moving next door to him, it was pretty cool.

Rick Rubin is a fascinating producer because he's not a musician, and he's got the ears of a non-musician. But he loves art. Sometimes I think being a musician is an impediment to being a good producer because you want to do all the cool things that you geek out about as a musician. But Rick's more like, "Nah man, this is great, let's do it this way." His background is insane, you can hear his production style whether it's the Chili Peppers, Tom Petty, us, whoever… The tune must be great and then he just pushes the tune along, that's what he did with us. It sounds odd to say, but Rick's "thing" is that he's very good at directing the energy, he encourages when things are moving in the right direction. But he does it without even telling you, it's almost nonverbal. That's sort of how Ric Ocasek worked with us too, it's interesting.

MD: I've loved Rick Rubin's work ever since I heard his Infinite Zero releases of (DC go-go band) Trouble Funk.

PW: That's funny because when we first got to Hollywood, we were playing with a guy named Tom Gardocki from the band

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Wax. He was all about bands like Double D Nose and all the go-go music that was coming out of out of DC. That music didn't explode across the country, but I thought that it was a cool scene.

MD: Throughout your career you have done a lot of side projects, but they haven't ever seemed to get in the way of the band. How have you achieved that balance?

PW: I love playing guitar too, so whenever we had a lot of creative downtime I just wanted to play. I think the reasons we had started the band had (sort of) changed a little bit, I think Rivers became more of a pure songwriter rather than a part of a super collaborative band dynamic. Everybody is on their own growth path, but I was really into guitars, and I had a somewhat naive view at the time. We were still pretty young in the 90s and I just wanted to play. That's when Mikey (Weezer's bass player at the time) and Atom Willard (on drums) and me (playing guitar) would go out and play. We toured across the country twice in a van, we just did it old school and it was really cool. Looking back, everybody wants to do things differently. But I still have a lot of great memories and love for driving around and drinking Rolling Rocks in the back of a van. I was in my late 20s at that point, then Weezer got back together and there was no time to do that anymore.

MD: Did the dynamic within the band change with all the side-projects? Because everybody was doing side projects and it never seemed to affect your band, or maybe I'm missing something…

PW: As you said before, we all love music. Maybe we're a little unusual in that way, but we just want to make cool music all the time. It can be a struggle in some ways, because at some point Weezer just blew up. Then it becomes hard to preserve that "four guys against the world thing" that you have in the beginning of a band. With success you get some sort of validation and you're no longer fighting against the world in the same way. Then people evolve, and their sense of self evolves, and because of that they want different things as time goes on. It's the classic band thing. But, if you stick around long enough everybody settles down and says, "Wow! It's pretty cool that that there's so many Weezer fans, let's just think about that."

> I marvel daily at the quality of the music that I grew up on, even more than I did when I was first hearing it. I wonder if anyone could create a track like The Who's "The Real Me" today?

MD: Is your band Special Goodness still around?

PW: It's funny that you ask that because sometimes I wonder why I am doing this other stuff. Then I realize that it's just because I love it. I don't have ulterior motives of *here's my business plan*, it's more that I just want to do things "old school" and if I think something is great, I want other people to hear it. What I write usually doesn't fit into tight little three-minute songs. In my heart I'm hearing much bigger ideas. Do you remember those late Talk Talk records? That's kind of what I'm

hearing now. I'm trying to perfect this formula of combining Vince Guaraldi, Van Halen, Gary Numan, and Photek. That's all I wind up doing, making music that has those elements and no singing.

MD: That's a nice musical recipe. Musicians play music, and we want to express our feelings and make people happy, it's all pretty simple.

PW: It's fortunate that I wound up in LA working with Rivers and these guys because it could have gone very differently. If I had hooked up with some kind of jam band or something I would probably be in some Grateful Dead style band because all I wanted to do was play, I just love playing.

MD: But after 19 (or so) records, how does Weezer's "four guys against the world" thing still work? Because it does, and it is!

PW: Rock music sounds the way it does because it's live music. When you put those instruments up on a stage it's gonna sound powerful. That's why rock music sounds the way it does, and that part of it never goes away. When you get up in the air of an audience it's exciting, that's the common denominator through all these years. It's probably that way for a lot of bands. If the music is good, then everything is good and that is not going to change. It kind of becomes self-evident whether the music is still any good. For example, if I could go and see Kajagoogoo play "Too Shy" today, I would love to see that, that's just a bangin' track.

MD: I must admit, a while back another drummer I interviewed made an Adam and the Ants reference, and he couldn't believe that I remembered and liked them. But you are the first drummer to make a Kajagoogoo reference.

PW: Oh yeah, I loved those bands, that music had serious swing. That's missing today, there's no swing, when people are playing straight beats, I don't hear any Ringo, John Bonham, or Ginger Baker or any of that stuff. When those guys played straight beats it had swing.

MD: I hear it in your playing, where do you think you're sense of swing comes from?

PW: Thanks, that's very nice of you to say. I'm not sure, but it doesn't come from a machine! I just read the Van Halen biography called *Van Halen Rising*, their old man was a pretty serious jazz guy and I'm told they would just start hammering malt liquors and play all afternoon, but sometimes their dad would just walk away and say, "You guys aren't swinging, I'm not doing this." That's why Van Halen sounds the way they do, because they have an awesome swing! I grew up on Van Halen, I love Alex Van Halen's drumming so much, the spirit was so fantastic in that band.

MD: What's your favorite Van Halen record and track?

PW: "Sinner's Swing." I'm gonna blow your mind. Taylor Hawkins, Josh Freese, and I would always laugh about this, but I can't hear it like a swing. I know the time is here, (Patrick snaps two and four during the intro) but I hear those notes like this (Patrick counts downbeats.) Josh would say, "No man, it's here! And he would snap two and four, but I can't hear it that way. I can hear the bounce, but I hear it turned around on the wrong beat.

MD: "So This is Love?" from that same record (*Fair Warning*) is one of the most swinging rock shuffles ever, it might as well have been Mel Lewis playing drums.

PW: I wish there were more bands like that today.

MD: I'll suggest a few. Wolfgang Van Halen's band Mammoth is killin' it. As is Nic Collins and Trev Lukather's band The Effect. And you gotta check out a young LA band called Dirty Honey.

PW: I'm glad you mentioned Nic Collins (Phil's son.) My kid and I often talk about how we want music to sound, we have like a little project studio here. And we've noticed that right up to Genesis' *Abacab* things are still sounding pretty natural, actually *Abacab* is sort of "natural plus." I can't believe how great that music is. To me, that was the high watermark of rock production. At some point kids are going to figure out that music doesn't have to be too produced. Make it good, but everybody wants everything to be so perfect now.

> ...we have been messing around like crazy with different set-ups. I've used remote hats, no rack toms, a floor tom on each side of me. Every day's set-up is different...

MD: What music have you been listening to recently?

PW: I find myself listening to more jazz like David Torn, Bill Frisell, John Scofield's Trio. I just discovered the band Gateway with John Abercrombie, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette. Jack is so fearless and insistent with everything he plays. I just found out about the David Torn band called Polytown with Terry Bozzio and Mick Karn. I just sent out a text to all my friends of Steve Winwood sitting in front of a fireplace singing "Can't Find My Way Home," that just blew my mind. I have been listening to the Vince Guaraldi and Bola Sete recordings a lot recently. I'm all over the place musically.

MD: After this tour, what's coming next?

PW: As always Rivers already has a great batch of songs written, he's so prolific, we don't have any problems in that regard.

MD: You mentioned that you play guitar, when did you start playing guitar?

PW: When I moved to LA I was into the guitar, I started playing guitar because I've always loved Van Halen, although I don't really play *anything* like him. Actually, on the demos for the first Weezer record I played some guitar on three of the tracks. I played guitar on "My Name is Jonas," "The World has Turned and Left Me Here," and "Surf Wax America." I did those on guitar with a four track in in West LA with Rivers singing. So my guitar playing is kind of baked into to what we do. Josh Freese actually played drums for us for a couple of years while I was playing guitar.

MD: That presents an interesting perspective for a question. As a drummer, what is playing with Josh like?

PW: Josh Freese is real drummer, he can do everything. I think Weezer sounded cool with him playing drums because he's a little bit more driving than I am. Every time I play the drums, I'm always trying to play Zeppelin's "When the Levee Breaks," my groove is just naturally laid back. Josh Freese can lay back, but he can play ahead, and he can play on top, he can do anything. He's the complete drummer who has no apparent difficulty with anything. Back in the day, he would have gotten the call for Steely Dan.

MD: But he would have flipped them off and done a Vandals gig

instead.

PW: Exactly. When Josh played with Weezer, I never said, "Do this or do that." That whole thing started because Rivers said, "I hate playing guitar, I'm not playing guitar anymore." I remember saying to him, "But that's the whole reason we started playing together, I loved your guitar playing before you even started singing. So when he didn't want to play guitar anymore, I said, "Well fine, I'm playing guitar," and we got Josh to play drums with us for two years.

MD: What it was like to hear somebody playing your drum parts?

PW: The first thing I noticed was when you're playing guitar you can't make the music feel a certain way and I took that for granted as a drummer. Like I said, I'm sort of laid back in the cut a little bit trying to find the slinky groove, and I play guitar like that too. With Josh it's different it's like, *"OK the train is leaving the station, let's go!!!"* When I was playing with him, I realized I'm not setting the tone anymore. That was a huge mental shift and a huge adjustment for me. I had to realize I'm the *guitar* player now, and that wasn't what I thought it would be. The drummer runs the show.

MD: What drums and cymbals are you using for the new tour?

PW: At home I have a Ludwig Classic Maple Citrus Mod kit in 13, 16, 18, 22 with a 6.5" snare, it sounds amazing! There's so much tone in every drum, the drums sound happy, you don't fight them, there's a wide tuning range, and I really love playing them. I have that same kit for my live rig. But I got so bored with that set-up that we have been messing around like crazy with different set-ups. I've used remote hats, no rack toms, a floor tom on each side of me. Every day's set-up is different, Chad Wolf is my tech and a great drummer unto himself and we're always trying to think of new things to try. We've started calling it "Ergo Fuego" because that's what we're trying to achieve. Ergo Fuego is when it looks like you're not fighting it, but it can't look like you don't care, and it can't look too easy.

MD: How about cymbals?

PW: I'm all over the place, but I typically like K's I like cymbals that are a little darker. I got a whole set of the Zildjian Special Dry's that are so dry and so low pitched it's crazy. I have gotten turned on to a bunch of more modern drummers over the last decade, I got fascinated with Bill Stewart, JoJo Mayer, and Keith Carlock… a little bit more technique-y guys. Those guys have made me want to take some lessons again and figure out how to get a little bit more of "that" into my facility. Those guys have also gotten me into the weirder sounding cymbals. Bill Stewart reminds me of Stevie Ray Vaughn, he has an endless bounty of cool ideas that just don't stop. He makes me wish that I could get out of my own head more when I play and just be able to let go.

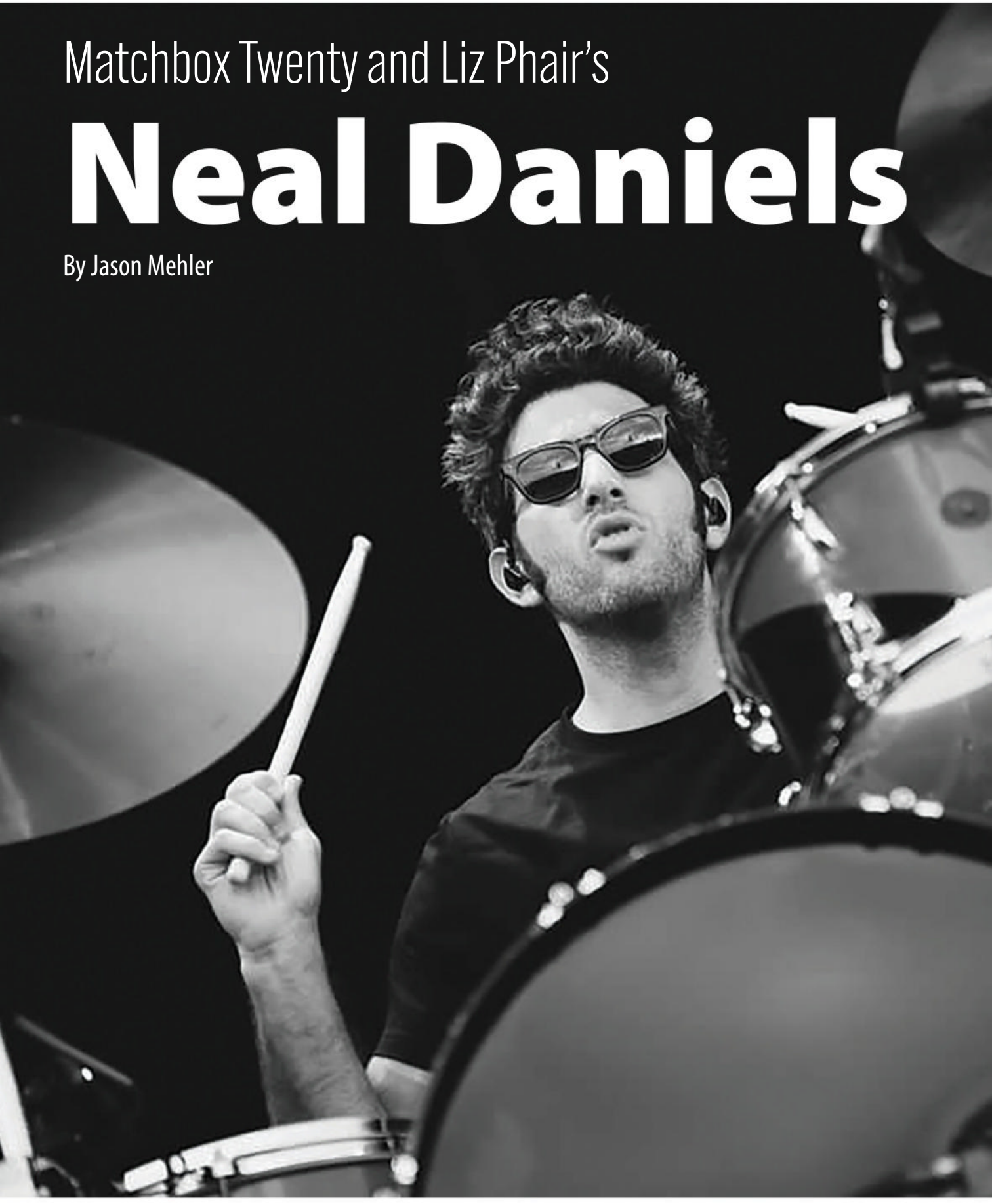
Karl Koch

Check out Pactrick's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Matchbox Twenty and Liz Phair's

Neal Daniels

By Jason Mehler



Tony Kurz

You may or may not have heard of pop/rock drummer Neal Daniels, but there's a good chance you'll be seeing a lot more of him in the future. He's been providing the rhythmic foundation for touring artists like Rachel Platten, LP, Liz Phair, Matt Nathanson, and now Matchbox Twenty. Though only thirty-five years old, Neal is a veteran to the touring world. He has perfected the art of landing great gigs for himself, and he feels a sense of duty to share and help others do the same.

MD: When did the drumming thing begin for you? Was there a distinct moment where you thought "Wow, that's cool! I want to do that!"

ND: My dad was a drummer. Not professionally, but there were always drums in the house. So, years before I picked up the drums, it was just something that was as common as a piece of furniture. They were just always there.

I actually started playing when I was in fifth grade in the school band. So I was ten, I started on the snare drum. Mr. Harshey was my teacher. So that's really where I started and my dad was all excited, it was nice for him to see me play. So, I did that for a few months, and then for some reason, I felt the urge or the need to switch to French horn!

MD: No way!

ND: Yeah, and I switched without telling my dad! I brought home this huge French horn; I was so excited. I mean, it's a cool looking instrument, for a fifth grader. Again, I was used to the drums, because they were always around, they weren't new and exciting to me, but the French horn was COOL. So, I brought this thing home, and the look on my dad's face… He placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "For the best, I think you should probably switch back to drums." It was a really funny moment but thank God I switched back.

MD: For sure.

ND: So, I played the drums for a while, but I think, because dad played as well, and he was really good, I became frustrated with my own progress. I remember he once tried to show me a buzz roll and I just couldn't do it, so I stormed off. Out of spite, I picked up guitar and started getting into metal. I formed my own band as a freshman in high school. We called the band "Annex", and I was the singer/guitarist. Our first gig was at "Hot Wheels" roller rink in the suburbs of Chicago. And then in my sophomore year, my dad died suddenly.

MD: Oh no!

Tony Kurz

ND: Yeah, it was very random and unexpected. He had a rare disease and spent a month in the hospital. He was healthy, and then he wasn't. He never really saw me pick up drums again. He only saw me play in shitty metal bands. Which is kind of funny, looking back.

MD: So when did you get back to the drums?

ND: I played drums in another band I started in High School called Chicago Green. We rehearsed in the guitar players dad's house. We called him, Captain. He let us paint his dining room purple and we rehearsed in there constantly. It was incredible and such a fun time in my life. We used to play at Reggies in Chicago before they were even open. Robby, the owner, was a fan of our band. He's still a great friend of mine.

Towards the end of high school, I started picking up drums more seriously, and I went on to a community college in the suburbs of Chicago where I studied jazz with a teacher named David Jennings. I had some teachers before him, but I think they were a bit detrimental to my playing. Some of my teachers very early on were showing me how to play in 15/16 before I could play a simple beat. They were teaching for their own pleasures and not for my benefit. David Jennings was the first teacher that really sat me down and took me back to the fundamentals. We got along great. He also knew I was into Zappa and told me about the L.A. Music Academy, where Ralph Humphrey was teaching along with Joe Porcaro. He encouraged me to attend their summer program, so I did and fell in love with it.

All my other friends went to college in Chicago, but because of my dad's death and this feeling of being stuck, I moved out to L.A. I was the only one that moved out. Alone, with no car, no drum set, and no money. But it was worth it.

MD: So, you picked up and left. How did your family take it? Do you have siblings? Were there any feelings of guilt for leaving so abruptly?

ND: I have a younger sister who was sixteen at the time. There wasn't much of a guilty feeling. Being nineteen and having lost a parent, things weren't going in a good direction for me in Chicago. The jam band / party scene was a trap that I needed to pull myself out of. Moving to L.A. was beyond intimidating, but by far the best move I've ever made for myself.

MD: I commend you for that. Even some grown adults have trouble making such decisive moves. How did it work out for you at school in L.A.?

ND: I've gotta say that beyond anything at that school, the best thing that came out of it for me was my relationship with the teachers. Ralph Humphrey and Joe Porcaro wrote the curriculum for Percussion Institute of Technology (PIT) drum program and started the Los Angeles Music Academy (LAMA). They both passed away in recent years, but we used to talk a lot, and I am so thankful that I got to know them. I also got to know teachers like Dave Beyer who has become a close friend of mine. I feel like a lot of students missed the opportunity to connect with these highly accomplished teachers on a personal level.

Some of my teachers very early on were showing me how to play in 15/16 before I could play a simple beat. They were teaching for their own pleasures and not for my benefit.

MD: Did you find the other students to be more motivated and driven than the people back in Chicago?

ND: Maybe so, but I just found that I was way more motivated being in a different environment. Most students moved from all over the world, so we were all in this new adventure together.

I was the kid who was practicing 8 hours per day and still getting out every night seeking every opportunity to sit in with bands and weird jams around town. By the time school ended, in two years I had moved four times. I feel like it helped me land gigs a lot faster.

MD: It sounds like you stayed agile and ready to make moves

on a whim.

ND: Yes. That, and just knowing that the more people you interact with, the more work you'll get. You may be the best drummer in the world, but if nobody knows who you are, then that's a problem. I remember posting flyers at school and around town looking for gigs. There was a point where I was going on Craigslist, applying for free gigs, borrowing a friend's drum set, and renting a car to drive to the gig. I'd do this all the time. I was losing money, but I was just so happy to get to play that it didn't matter.

MD: When did things start to break through for you?

ND: One of the first gigs I got was a band playing at the Mint in LA. We opened for a singer and actor named Darren Criss, who, at the time was in a musical and was pretty well-known. The bass player in this free gig that I took, was also playing with Darren. He introduced me and the next time Darren played, I was the drummer. What was really cool is that Darren had just landed a role on the TV Series *Glee*, so all of the sudden he was like the most Googled person and his career was blowing up. And somehow, I was just there from taking this free gig. And so, I always tell people, if you just keep moving and saying yes to every opportunity, something is going to happen.

There was a point where I was going on Craigslist, applying for free gigs, borrowing a friend's drum set, and renting a car to drive to the gig. I'd do this all the time. I was losing money, but I was just so happy to get to play that it didn't matter.

MD: Do you think some drummers miss great opportunities out of the fear of failure or conflict? You don't know which gig is going to really take off.

ND: You never know! You just need to be out there. I think there's also an element of social anxiety holding people back, especially fast-forwarding to today, after the pandemic. I feel bad for the younger guys who just moved to LA. It's just so saturated with amazing drummers. On top of that, now you have Instagram and TikTok! Every time you open your phone, someone is killing it more than you, with better gigs, and more followers. It's intimidating and can get really frustrating, especially for people just moving to L.A.

MD: And with social media being a starting point to finding talent, if you don't have a ton of followers or aren't posting content, you're at a disadvantage.

ND: Yeah, it's very judgmental. Also, with phones and social media being so prevalent in everyone's life, if you feel awkward in a situation, it's too easy to just pull out your phone and feel better rather than shaking hands, breaking the ice and meeting people. I'm just a big believer in being personable. You can hide behind a phone, but at a certain point, you're going to need good people skills.

MD: What about the other drummers like yourself who ARE making things happen? What is the dynamic amongst other working drummers?

ND: The drummer community in general is pretty tight and very supportive, I think everyone would agree. There's not a lot of "gig stealing" going on, but you'd be crazy to say that it's not competitive. Everybody wants those big gigs. There's only a handful of those large gigs and a ton of great drummers, but

Jim Trocchio

Jim Trocchio

I think being strategic with who you're hanging out with and putting yourself in situations strategically, ends up yielding really good results. If you want big gigs in the pop world, then you should be surrounding yourself with people that are already doing that.

MD: So, reach out, make strategic moves, put yourself where they are etc.?

ND: Yes, and I think just being a cool dude that people want to hang out with will get you more gigs than anything else. Don't get me wrong, your drumming skills are important, but being a likeable person is more important in my opinion. Be someone that people wouldn't mind having on a tour bus for twenty hours at a time. You want to be the person that people miss when the group goes out to dinner.

MD: Ha, yes! "Hey, where the hell is Neal?"

ND: Exactly.

MD: However, being too much of a fun guy can get you in trouble.

ND: Oh absolutely. My dad used to tell me "There's a time and a place for everything." There's a time to be a party animal and there is DEFINITELY a time not to be.

MD: Hopefully you have good instincts and use common sense.

ND: Yeah, and, if you're hanging with the people that are really crushing it, you kinda learn what works and what doesn't, you know? Just observe and repeat.

MD: Ok. Let's get back to your career. What happened after the Darren Criss gig? What came next?

ND: After that, I was touring with random people in vans for years, sleeping on the floor in the van and just dreaming of one day being on a bus. I was in L.A., truly just paying my dues. The first bus tour I ever did was with Bea Miller, who was opening for Selena Gomez. I auditioned for that gig and got it. It was my first big gig, which was a big deal for my friend group because nobody in my circle in L.A. had ever played arenas before. It was kind of a win for all of us. From that group's musical director, I got a gig playing with an artist named Daya, which was pretty cool. In 2016, on my birthday, I had a big party planned with 30 people at Bludso's BBQ in L.A. and I got a call to audition for Rachel Platten. I cancelled the party, learned the songs, and auditioned at SIR with five other drummers who were absolutely awesome (and still my friends today). I ended up getting the gig, and that was a big turning point for me. She had just written the song "Fight Song", which was huge. That was my first REAL headlining gig. I was with her for a few years and from her musical director, I landed some one-off gigs with Post Malone and Camila Cabello. It was a cool time.

MD: What then?

ND: When the Rachel gig ended, I was looking for something else, and that's when Stacy Jones (Musical Director and drummer, working with Miley Cyrus, Matchbox Twenty, The Chainsmokers and more) called me to audition for the artist LP. That was the first time Stacy and I worked together. I remember wanting that gig so bad. I watched all LP's videos and checked out her style and look. She had this high-end, Yves Saint Laurent thing going on. The nicest clothes, always dressed to the nines. The nicest shit you've ever seen. So, aside from learning the songs to where I could play them in my sleep, I dressed the

Don't get me wrong, your drumming skills are important, but being a likeable person is more important in my opinion.

nicest I could. I looked like a rock star walking into the audition. I wore my nicest black pointy boots, skinny jeans, I looked the part. The second I walked in, she said to me "Hey, Nice Boots." Sometimes you just know. Whenever I leave an audition, I just know. I knew it was the right fit. There were several drummers auditioning, mostly looking like typical L.A. side guys. Black T-shirt, converse, sunglasses, etc. Sometimes going the extra mile will really pay off, and sometimes it has nothing to do with the music. Another thing about the audition, in Stacy's email he stated "We have everything here. Drums, cymbals, snare, etc. Just show up and play." So I didn't bring anything. It was ZBT Zildjians and some trashy drums. That was fine with me. I followed the instructions. You see every other drummer walking in with their cymbals and pedals. You should be able to walk in and crush it on anything. I'll play a cardboard box, I don't care, you know? And so, I think the combination of knowing the parts, playing on whatever was provided, and dressing the part, played a huge role in landing the gig.

So, aside from learning the songs to where I could play them in my sleep, I dressed the nicest I could. I looked like a rock star walking into the audition. I wore my nicest black pointy boots, skinny jeans, I looked the part. The second I walked in, she said to me "Hey, Nice Boots."

MD: Dressing the part is a common sense move that eludes people for some reason. It's like a "forest for the trees" scenario.

ND: I always find it amazing how many people overlook the obvious. You've gotta look like you belong in the band. I always assume that the other (curated list of) drummers are going to do great on the drum parts. You've got to find the other elements that will set you apart. Why hire me over them?

MD: Find the low-hanging fruit.

ND: Yeah, if you can be relatable without opening your mouth, that's a true art. It's not always about how well you play.

MD: What other auditions have had a similar outcome?

ND: Well, the bass player from Rachel Platten brought me the opportunity to audition for Booker T. Al Jackson is one of my favorite drummers. We had to learn "Green Onions" and "Time is Tight" and so on. Once again, I was dressed in a nice suit. The last guy who just walked out was in converse and black t-shirt. The minute I walked in, Booker T looked at me and smiled. I knew I got the gig. He was wearing a suit jacket too. He wore a hat and had his whole vibe; he looked great and so did I. Even the other drummers were confused and thought I was already one of the musicians in the band. He's a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend. Out of respect, you should look the part.

MD: Did you land the gig.

ND: Yes, I did. I played with him for a few years. It was one of the greatest learning experiences of my life. No click, no tracks obviously. He had great stories about Al, and he taught me so much about timekeeping. To play "Green Onions" for an extended period is no joke. The only tiny criticism that he ever gave me was about my snare sound. He said "Man, you should put a wallet on the snare." I said, "I don't have a wallet." And he said, "Well, Al Jackson always had a wallet." So, I went out and bought a wallet and used it from then on.

MD: You also played percussion for Dua Lipa. Tell me about that.

ND: I got a call from a friend who had the gig with Dua Lipa but needed to sub it out. He trusted me to cover it without too much hassle. We did a couple late-night shows and a live music video of "Don't Start Now". It was cool. I think the end goal for any working drummer is to meet and befriend as many people as possible so that they feel comfortable enough to call and trust you to sub for a gig that they play themselves. That's what happened with Dua. My buddy knew I could handle it and he knew I wouldn't steal the gig. It comes back to just being a normal, cool dude.

Charlie Weinmann

MD: Being trustworthy.

ND: Yes. Even with Liz Phair, I had to sub out a bunch of shows to a friend of mine whom I trust. It always comes back to me. I love that gig.

MD: Tell me about the Liz Phair gig. How did that come about and what is it like?

ND: Once again, I got recommended for the gig. Being from Chicago, I knew about Liz. She was a local hero growing up. I was a big fan and all my favorite drummer's have played on her records. Anyway, we

rehearsed and went out on the *Soberish Tour* in 2019. The day that all the airports began to shut down because of the pandemic, I was traveling back from overseas with Liz. We made it back just in time before everything halted. Liz was my last gig before COVID.

MD: What do you love about that gig?

ND: I love that gig because there are real instruments on stage, which seems to be rarer these days. The first tour we did, nobody had in-ears. We were using wedges. No click, no tracks. Blaring guitars, bass, and drums on stage. Just like a heavy rock band. It was the first time at a pro level that I had done that because most pop gigs use in-ears, tracks, and click. It was a true joy to play and really fulfilled me musically. And all the guys in her band are my best friends in town, so it was just a great tour.

The songs are so good, and her fans are REAL fans. Because of her demographic and the people that come out, you don't see a lot of phones out. The audiences are really watching and listening. They are in the moment. When I review my GoPro footage of the shows, The audience is engaged, and nobody is filming with their phones. There's not a lot of YouTube videos of her shows.

MD: Is "No phones please" a rule that Liz announces at the show?

ND: No, that's why it's so cool. I think that her era is just like, pre-iPhone. Her fans just really love her music. They don't care about showing their friends the video on their phones. People come to those shows to live a moment in time. And it makes us play better too! We're not looking out into a sea of cell phones. I always look forward to playing with her. It's like a true rock show.

MD: And Liz herself… What's the dynamic? Is there a good connection there?

ND: Oh, she's the best! She's just a band member, you know? There's not really like an "artist" vibe with her. Our tour bus is her, and the four of us. Just the band. No tour manager or crew. She just wants to hang with the band and doesn't want to be around any drama. It's great. After every show, she's not stuck in her room; she's having late-night food with the band. She's just so cool and down-to-earth. One of the coolest artists that I've had the pleasure of working with.

Jim Trocchio

MD: Speaking of artists you've worked with. You and I met in West Palm Beach while you were on tour with Matt Nathanson. How did that gig come about?

ND: Stacy Jones and I became good friends, and when Matt Nathanson (opening for Matchbox Twenty) was looking for a drummer, Stacy was like, I know the perfect guy! We're both so busy and we never get to hang out in town, so this was a great way to hang for a summer. It was an amazing experience watching him play every night. He's one of my favorite drummers.

MD: That show in West Palm was great and Matt Nathanson is hilarious! Great frontman. What's it like as a band member?

ND: Matt, like Liz, is also fantastic to travel with. He just

hangs with the band. He's super great and chill. And yes, he is absolutely hilarious and a great friend. Everyone in that camp is awesome. When you bond with someone so quickly on the road… a REAL bond, not something fake or forced, it's the greatest thing because you're not walking on tippy toes. So Matt, Liz, LP, Rob Thomas… I've been really lucky, striking a chord with some of these people, having things in common and just getting along.

MD: So finally, we move on to Matchbox Twenty. Obviously, your relationship with Stacy Jones put you first-in-line for that opportunity. Tell me about that.

ND: Yes. Actually, Matt Nathanson's leg of the tour was extended due to a cancellation, so if I had not made some hard career moves to continue with him on the second leg of that tour, it's not likely that I would be in a position to take the Matchbox gig. Simply put, I was in the right place, at the right time, with the right friends, on the right gig. A lot of stars had to align, but at the end of the day, I have Stacy to thank because without him I wouldn't have been on the tour with Matt in the first place.

MD: As you know, I spent the entire day with Stacy Jones and the Matchbox Twenty guys at that show in West Palm. Their vibe and demeanor was similar to how you described the other artists. Very chill and down-to-earth. Was that your experience as well?

ND: Absolutely, everyone in that camp is a joy to be around. Always very inviting and respectful and always great when my wife is around. It's just awesome and super professional.

MD: So, preparing for the Matchbox Twenty gig, did you have to hit the albums and start learning the parts?

ND: Oh yeah, for starters, I charted the whole set note for note on my iPad. I started doing this towards the end of the summer tour by getting a board tape from their monitor guy. As far as practicing at home, I set up an identical kit with the same sizes, exact cymbals, and electronics etc. I needed to be as prepared and comfortable as possible because there was only one rehearsal before my first show, so it was a lot of material to memorize, as I didn't want to have charts on stage. Regardless of the time you take to prepare, it's always one thing to nail it at home alone, in the comfort of your own studio in your workout shorts, but it's another thing to execute live in front of 25,000 people, where your in-ear mix isn't great, your pedal is sliding, and your adrenaline is pumping. It can be stressful up there!

I always try and bring myself back to a relaxed mindset, one that I have at home. I've got a yoga mat, some hand warmers and a Theragun to help, as well as a couple minute meditation before the show. That always helps. You'll often hear musicians say that they play their best shows tired, like after a long travel day or something. I think this has to do with the adrenaline being low, and being relaxed, more than anything.

MD: Do you suffer from any form of stage fright?

ND: Well, never stage fright, but I do have to regulate my adrenaline. I, like many drummers, have some difficulty with tempos. I remember as a kid, playing back video of myself at shows where the song was no less than 20 BPM faster than the original. I felt great on stage, and so did the other band members, but it was flying. The singer couldn't even get any words out. It was a real problem trying to contain that. I talk about this all the time, and I find it fascinating that it's not talked about more often. It's gotta be one of the most common problems.

Even today when I go onstage with Matchbox, I have a little click that starts the song and sometimes I have to do a double-take to make sure I'm on the right song. I need the click reference for like 16 bars, even when there aren't tracks throughout the song, just to stay out of my own head. I still struggle with it, but I have much better ways of overcoming it now, where as a kid, I just thought I was the worst drummer of all time.

MD: I have it too. It's like your "fight or flight" mechanism kicks in and just slows down the moment where you can dodge bullets like NEO from the Matrix. Then when you play it back, you look super-human.

ND: There's a song called "How Far We've Come", and it's no joke. It's a fast and challenging song to play. However, playing it live, I feel like I could play it 80 BPM faster, to the point where I listen to the click and think, this can't be right. But it's right, and when I play it back, it sounds great.

MD: What can drummers do to replicate that feeling for the purpose of practicing and getting it under control?

ND: Easy. Have someone watch you play. Even with my wife, who I'm very comfortable with. I will ask her to watch me run down the set. I'm nervous and it makes me play differently. You could do like a friend's night and have a couple buddies over to watch you play. Or, if you are by yourself, you could do some exercises to get your heart rate up prior to practicing. Nothing beats having other people sit in though.

> Avoid practicing absolute nonsense. I made that mistake early on. A lot of kids can tear me to shreds with chops and acrobatics but can't play a solid beat without adding something else.

MD: You just returned from the Australian tour with Matchbox. Any interesting stories from the road?

ND: Well, something that was pretty cool was that Rob Thomas, being an animal lover with his own charity, would arrange for animals to hang out with us before shows. We had Kangaroos, Wallabies, and little Koalas just chilling and creating this very calm, relaxing environment. Anyway, not a lot of stories, but I was just taking it all in. It's a total dream gig for me.

MD: You were recently invited to be a guest drummer with the 8G band on the *Seth Meyers Show*. How was that?

ND: Playing with the 8G band was an amazing experience. It's a stressful environment. Even though it's not technically live, there's a live audience. The show is running and it's up to the drummer to cue and to end things when the guest sits down. It's a little challenging to execute. Playing in that environment takes a whole extra set of skills. Not only are you trying to play great, but you're also trying to look great because you know there's a camera on you, and you're trying to execute the cues correctly. It's difficult, but it's a true dream gig. I'd do it every day. Eric Leiderman is a great dude and he's doing a great thing for the drumming community. Of course, the show is about the guests,

but there is also this subculture where it's about the drummer too. It's brought a lot of light to the drumming community, and I just love that.

MD: Do you choose the songs that are played?

ND: It's like little jingles and small arrangements. But you provide your input. It's a lot of fun.

MD: You also have a DRUMEO video out there. What's it about?

ND: With the DRUMEO video, I wanted to provide a different perspective. Many drummers will go on there and chop it up, teaching skills and technique. I love that stuff too. I just wanted to pass on some insight into things that are prevalent in my world as a pop drummer for hire. The segment is called "How to Get and Keep a Gig." Like, how do you go about finding auditions. How to dress, what gear do you need, how to behave etc. Just trying to pass some real-world knowledge to drummers looking to make a career out of this.

MD: As for the playing portion of "Keeping a Gig", what advice do you have for drummers?

ND: Avoid practicing absolute nonsense. I made that mistake early on. A lot of kids can tear me to shreds with chops and acrobatics but can't play a solid beat without adding something else. On most of these paying gigs, that just doesn't fly. You are a supporting actor. You'll win an award, but you're not the lead role. You've gotta play for the music, not the other drummers in the audience. And it's actually liberating when you stop trying to impress other drummers and just try to make the band sound great. I'd much rather someone come up to me after the show and say, "Man, the band sounded so good," rather than "Hey, that lick you did there was awesome." I mean who cares?

So, dressing the part, playing for the music, being a likeable person, it all goes hand-in-hand with getting and keeping gigs. I know that it's resonating because I've given over 100 Zoom lessons since the DRUMEO segment has come out to kids that want to know how to get gigs. Because I didn't have somebody at that age to talk to about it, I feel some sort of responsibility to help. I love talking about it.

I'm the last of any of my friends to have a studio. I wanted to be the touring guy, so that's where my focus was. Then when everything stopped in 2020, I dove in hard and bought everything at once.

MD: Now that you are off tour, how are you spending your downtime?

ND: When I'm off tour, I just enjoy being home. I'm a proud homeowner and I just love fixing stuff up and making it homey. Hanging with my wife and my dog. I've been biking and going to the gym. Just keeping healthy. I've also built a full studio at the house.

MD: Tell me about the studio. Did you always have the recording bug?

ND: No, in fact I avoided having a studio. I'm the last of any of my friends to have a studio. I wanted to be the touring guy, so that's where my focus was. Then when everything stopped in 2020, I dove in hard and bought everything at once. Tons of mics, outboard gear, cables, everything. I have a full-on studio called "Whitefish Studios" and I love it. I've learned so much and I record all the time.

MD: Do you record tracks for other artists?

ND: Oh sure. I send stuff out all over the world. People can go to **NealDaniels.com** for all booking info.

MD: Well with that, I'll let you get to it. We hope to meet up with you back on the road soon!

ND: Thanks! And thank you to everyone at *Modern Drummer*!

Check out Neal's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Brian Bixby

Tina Raymond

Musical Divinations and Educational Heritage

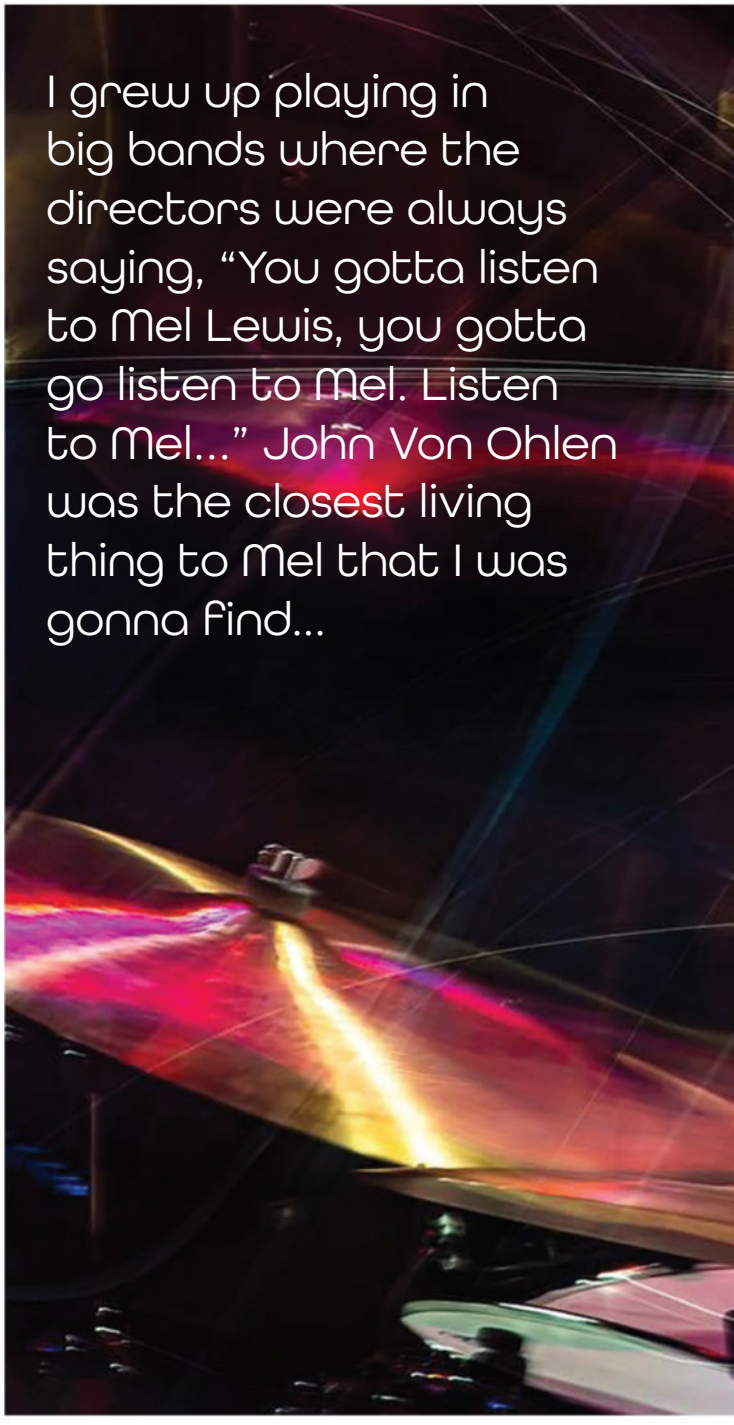
By Mark Griffith

Tina Raymond is a musical force of nature. With over 20 records (as a leader and a side person) to her credit, she can play anything. Her newest record called *Divinations* is one of the best drummer-led records I've heard in a while. Her playing with Rachel Eckroth on *Humanoid* is genre breaking beauty. Her playing with Dan Rosenboom is best described as "heavy metal free jazz," her playing with avant-garde jazz legend Bobby Bradford is jaw-dropping, and her playing in the band The Esthesis Quartet will shock you with subtle beauty. She is also the director of jazz studies and the drumming instructor at California State University Northridge. Tina has a midwestern soul wrapped inside a Los Angeles aesthetic. And her drumming has all of that, and much, much, more…

Brian Bixby

MD: Tell me about your musical background.
TR: I grew up playing in metro Detroit and played in the Civic Jazz Orchestra with Marcus Belgrave. I studied with several drummers when I was coming up. I did the marching band thing and took lessons in that field with some amazing old school drum teachers. I studied with a man named Rich Hogan who is one of the most Zen, and also terrifying, teachers I've ever had, he instilled so much respect in me. I let the marching band stuff go because I figured, how far can I go with marching band in creating a professional career? Then I studied with a classical teacher who also taught drum set and is a great drum set player in his own right named Dan Maslanka. I was doing classical and jazz and was feeling that in college I wanted to do a double major in classical and drum set for my undergrad. Cincinnati College Conservatory made that possible for me, and that's where I got to study with John Von Ohlen. He was living in Cincinnati for the last 20 years of his life, but he also had a farmhouse in Indiana he would go there when he didn't want to talk to anybody.
MD: For those who don't know, John Von Ohlen is a legendary drummer who played with Stan Kenton and Woody Herman. He led a big band called the Blue Wisp Big Band in the Midwest for most of his life after Kenton. He is a true drumming legend. What was the experience of studying with him like?
TR: It started with seeing him play live every week at The Blue Wisp. A lot of students don't go and see their teachers perform, that wasn't me. I was there watching every week. Just being around him was such an incredible experience. He taught me about the drummer's mindset and what a drummer's responsibility is to an ensemble. I learned so much about taking care of the bandstand from him. Watching and hearing him play was amazing. To just talk to him about being a musician and being a drummer was priceless.
MD: What led you to him?
TR: I grew up playing in big bands where the directors were always saying, "You gotta listen to Mel Lewis, you gotta go listen to Mel. Listen to Mel…" Von Ohlen was the closest living thing to Mel that I was gonna find, and I was so fortunate that he was in Cincinnati at that time. On the classical side, there were three percussionists teaching at Percussion Group Cincinnati named Allen Otte, Russel "Rusty" Burge, and Jim Culley. Art Gore, who studied with the great Alan Dawson, was also teaching there, so was Marc Wolfey who is another great drummer and teacher. At Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music I had this whole collection of great drummers as mentors.
MD: What type of music were you playing at college, and what specifically were you studying?
TR: I was in the big band and small combos. The Cincinnati drum set program was very traditional, we played bebop and big band music. The classical percussion program was much more avant-garde, we played percussion music by John Cage and Lou Harrison. The classical percussion program was actually much more progressive than the jazz program. Looking back on my progress and my evolution, it was a great place to get the foundations of drum set, learn about transcribing, the ride cymbal, and playing a shuffle— the fundamentals. At other more traditional schools outside of the Midwest, you might not learn about those fundamentals while also learning about the progressive and avant-garde approach to percussion. That all made me very conscious of different types of improvisation and different types of music that are outside the norm.
MD: There is probably no better experience than playing big band shuffles in the Midwest, and to get that instruction from Von Ohlen is the cherry on top, tell me about that.
TR: It was always all about the groove and being the invisible heartbeat of the ensemble. There was a really deep focus on the pocket, Von Ohlen called it "the slot," and he would stress to make sure that you were always in the slot.

My parents are both academics, and they insisted that I go from my undergrad at Cincinnati directly to get my Masters. I was studying with Jeff Hamilton at the time, and I knew I wanted to get out of the Midwest, so I asked Jeff who (on the West Coast) I could study with and still take lessons with him (Jeff.) He told me that the only person I could study with, and



the only place I could study was with Joe LaBarbera at Cal Arts, so that's what I did, that was the best advice I could have gotten.

MD: What types of things were you studying with Jeff Hamilton?

TR: Jeff and I were doing a lot of listening to Philly Joe and Mel and talking a lot about concept. We were working on a lot of fundamental language, meat and potatoes kind of information. Jeff's concept is that you're the furnace, you're the heartbeat, you're the energetic center of the band, and all of that must be manifested through your ride cymbal. That was very much an extension of what I was learning from Von Ohlen, but in a more codified way.

It's funny, after I moved to LA I did a yoga teacher training, and then I found out that John Von Ohlen had actually gone to India at one point to study meditation with a guru. I realized that all these teachers were thinking about the relationship between energy and being a drummer. As a drummer, you're the energetic center of an ensemble, that was an interesting discovery. Jeff is very conscious of energy, but he doesn't come at it from an esoteric state. He's much more about the growl in the furnace and how to manifest that on the ride cymbal, and how that must be an energetic inspiration for the ensemble. There was a lot of playing back and forth with me trying to

Eron Rauch

absorb and expand my vocabulary. At the time, I had a lot of great chop information, I just didn't know how to use it, so we were working on that a lot.

MD: In jazz drumming the ride cymbal is where it must start, tell me how you developed that?

TR: Gravity. That was Von Ohlen's thing, while staying as loose as possible. Drop the stick and it will do the rest of the beat for you. That's how you get that wide open Mel Lewis sound. You allow gravity to create your ride cymbal pattern, you're not re-articulating in the middle of the pattern. You drop the stick on two and four and that's what creates the beat.

MD: Whose ride cymbal beats did you gravitate towards?

TR: Billy Higgins, Art Blakey, and Mel Lewis.

MD: Once Jeff directed you to Joe LaBarbera, what did you study with Joe?

TR: Joe pulled me in the opposite direction, and I needed it. I was trying to get all this vocabulary together with all this rudimental information, but I was becoming formulaic and uninspired. Joe helped me become more of a melodic player. It was so interesting because I was subscribing to the idea of a loose ride cymbal beat, but I was not doing that kind of playing on the rest of the set. Joe would have me play free and stay loose on the drums. If you watch Jeff Hamilton play, he's loose, but there's so much vocabulary and phrasing that's wonderful and completely his own. I was trying to emulate Jeff so much, that I didn't have a voice of my own. Joe really helped me learn how to play melodically on the drums, we would play melodies on the drums and transcribe horn solos and play those on the drums. I had to develop a more a melodic concept, and I'm so grateful I did. It really opened my playing.

I was also studying with a West African drum teacher at Cal Arts named Alfred Ladzekpo. If you couldn't find me in my practice room, I was probably in the West African room. I learned all the West African stuff by ear, and I learned to hear different elements of music like call and response. Alfred taught at Cal Arts for 40 years, he retired just after I graduated. He's a Chief back in his village, and a few of us went visit and hang out with him in his village. West African music and drumming is so deep and so important in the evolution of jazz and the rhythms that inspire jazz music. It's all in the polyrhythms and understanding of the cyclical nature of music, that's important. The polyrhythms of 3 is 4, 4 is 3, and 2 is 6 are all happening at the same time, and you can pull at any of them at any moment. Not to mention the understanding of the 12/8, the fact that music and dance are inseparable, and that everything you play doesn't have to be "transcribable." I've learned all of that from John Von Ohlen, Joe LaBarbera, Jeff Hamilton, and Alfred Ladzekpo; those are the most influential drum teachers I've ever had.

MD: We're all a product of those who have who have taught us. So what have you taken from each of those guys to bring to your own teaching today at Northridge?

TR: From John Von Ohlen I have taken his idea to always be a servant to gravity, and to stay as relaxed as possible. I also love John's ability to roll with things, he used to always say that "Some days you're the dog, and some days you're the hydrant," I love that.

I use Joe's actual physical pieces of paper and exercises so much. More than anyone else I've studied with; Joe's written material creates a great tangible process for getting better. He would give really great specific assignments. Sometimes Von Ohlen would say, "Just get up and play the ride cymbal every day!" That's a great process that I do assign to my students. But Joe (especially) had so many coordination exercises that he had pulled from *Modern Drummer* (and elsewhere) over the years, he also hands out different transcriptions that he had done. I think some people might say that giving a student a written transcription before they start transcribing is cutting corners, but when you are getting students started, they can see what it looks like, so they know how to do it, and that helps students get into the process of transcribing.

You allow gravity to create your ride cymbal pattern, you're not re-articulating in the middle of the pattern. You drop the stick on two and four and that's what creates the beat.

From Alfred and the West African tradition, I learned about the muting techniques on drums. I love the sound of a muted floor tom. That texture is such a big part of the sound of the West African music and drumming. One time Alfred and I did a lesson that was all call and response playing. That really got me out of my own head and concentrating more on the moment and the patience of listening. You really must be patient to learn. Alfred and I were playing some call and response phrases, and he stopped and remarked, "You are really good at this." That acknowledgement felt really good at that moment, because sometimes you can feel really beaten down in the music school environment.

MD: How do you transcribe?

TR: At the drums or listening and learning how to sing what you are transcribing and going from there.

MD: What do you take from Jeff when you are teaching?

TR: Intensity, I appreciate his intensity. He's also so great with stories. There was one lesson when he said, "You've got a *Red Garland left hand*." I said, "Thank you." He replied, "No, that's not a compliment, that's a bad thing because you're playing every upbeat." That kind of humor and wit is important, I'm never going to be as funny as Jeff, but when it came to explaining how things are supposed to work because of something else, he was wonderful. Joe is an incredibly patient teacher, as was John, but Jeff… *not so much*. He was more "That's not right, do it again," but I have taken a lot of that from him too.

MD: Explain what you mean by "How things are supposed to work because of something else."

TR: When I'm working with bass players who aren't playing on top of the beat enough, I'll quote Jeff. He has a story about playing with Ray Brown when Ray was playing very far on top of the beat in a concert hall. Jeff asked Ray if he could hear him, and why was he playing so far on top of the beat? Ray's

explanation was, "The sound waves of my instrument are much bigger than the sound waves of your ride cymbal, so for those two things to sound at the same time in the back of the room, I need to play more on top of the beat." Obviously, the way Jeff tells the story is much better, but the fundamental point is to tell bass players that they must play more on top of the beat because acoustically their sound isn't going to get there as quickly. It's such a beautiful and memorable way to explain that phenomenon.

MD: How long have you been teaching at California State University Northridge?

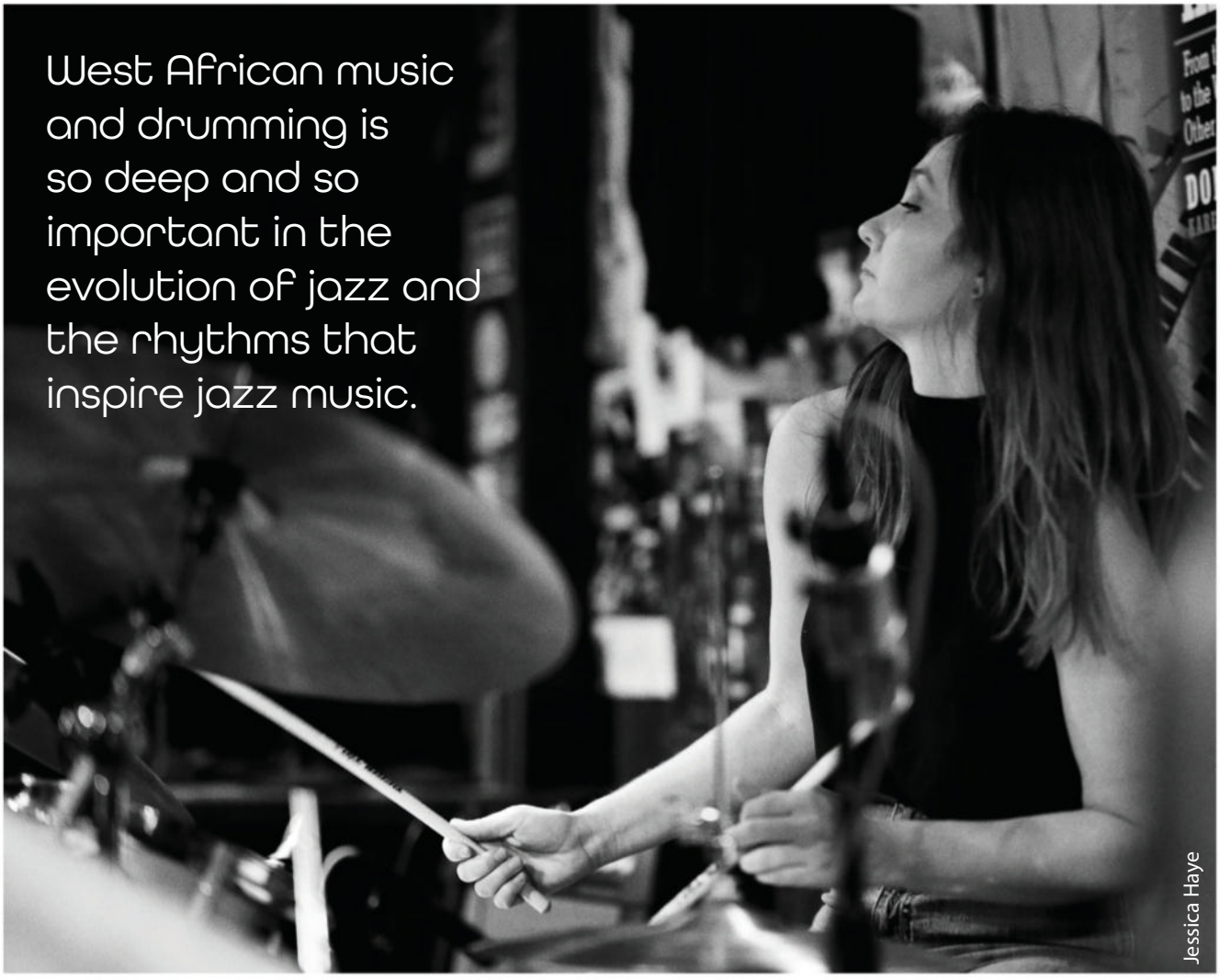
TR: This is my fourth year, I started during Covid which was weird, but the students are amazing, and it's a very enjoyable place to work.

MD: What do college drumming students do well these days, and what do they need to work on?

TR: A positive is that today's students are super nurturing, open, friendly, and supportive of each other. When I was coming up in Cincinnati there was more of a competitive vibe which I think was quite toxic. These students can really embrace each other's strengths and help each other with their weaknesses. They share information with each other in a way that is so much healthier than when I was coming up. I learned about that and was exposed to that at Cal Arts too. Cal Arts has always been able to foster that kind of environment. 20 years ago, I think that the North Texas and Indiana University attitude fostered a competitive environment that was put on a pedestal, back then that's what it meant to go to jazz school. Maybe they're different now, I certainly hope so. I'm so proud of the students today for getting out of their own way, supporting each other, and building a community together.

The weaknesses… I think the drum students today are not as focused on rudimental language as they should be. I make sure that the drummers that study with me are doing the rudimental drum solos like Wilcoxon and Pratt because that is becoming less appreciated and less popular with a lot of the younger drummers. The drummers that are popular right now aren't using that kind of language, they're playing gospel chops singles and that kind of language. I think they're missing out on a huge part of the tradition and the language. They also play these horrible rim and unnecessary shots all the time.

My students and I do a lot of snare drum work. If you don't have good hands, *good luck!* I oscillate between rudimental solos and classical snare drum solos from Delecluse, (if they



are ready for that,) Cirone or Mitchel Peters. I think classical snare drum work is amazing because it helps you with dynamic control, which is another thing that is lacking.

MD: Young drummers don't like to play soft, it's hard to play soft because the stick isn't bouncing, but that really helps you develop control.

TR: You're right, I love playing softly. It's a less flashy thing to work on and you must have a lot of patience to work on it, but I do make my students do those kinds of rudimental and classical snare drum pieces. We also do different variations of three and four limb coordination exercises, and transcribing. We go through the history of drumming transcribing Gene Krupa solos, Buddy Rich solos, and all the way up through Philly Joe, Roy Haynes, and Art Blakey, and then on to the more modern stuff.

But I'm not just the drum teacher here, I run the whole program. Anyone who's considering running a music or jazz program should be aware of how much administration there is. The process of being an administrator can (and will) take you out of the classroom. That's a big shift. It took me a couple years to get used to not being able to focus as much on the classroom, it made me restructure a lot of my life. I needed to create a space and a time for me to be creative outside of school. That is how my latest record came to be. It was a whole restructuring of my world so that I could have creative space.

MD: That is a huge adjustment, I can relate, you should try running a drum magazine sometime.

TR: I can only imagine.

MD: What have you found to help you with that restructuring?

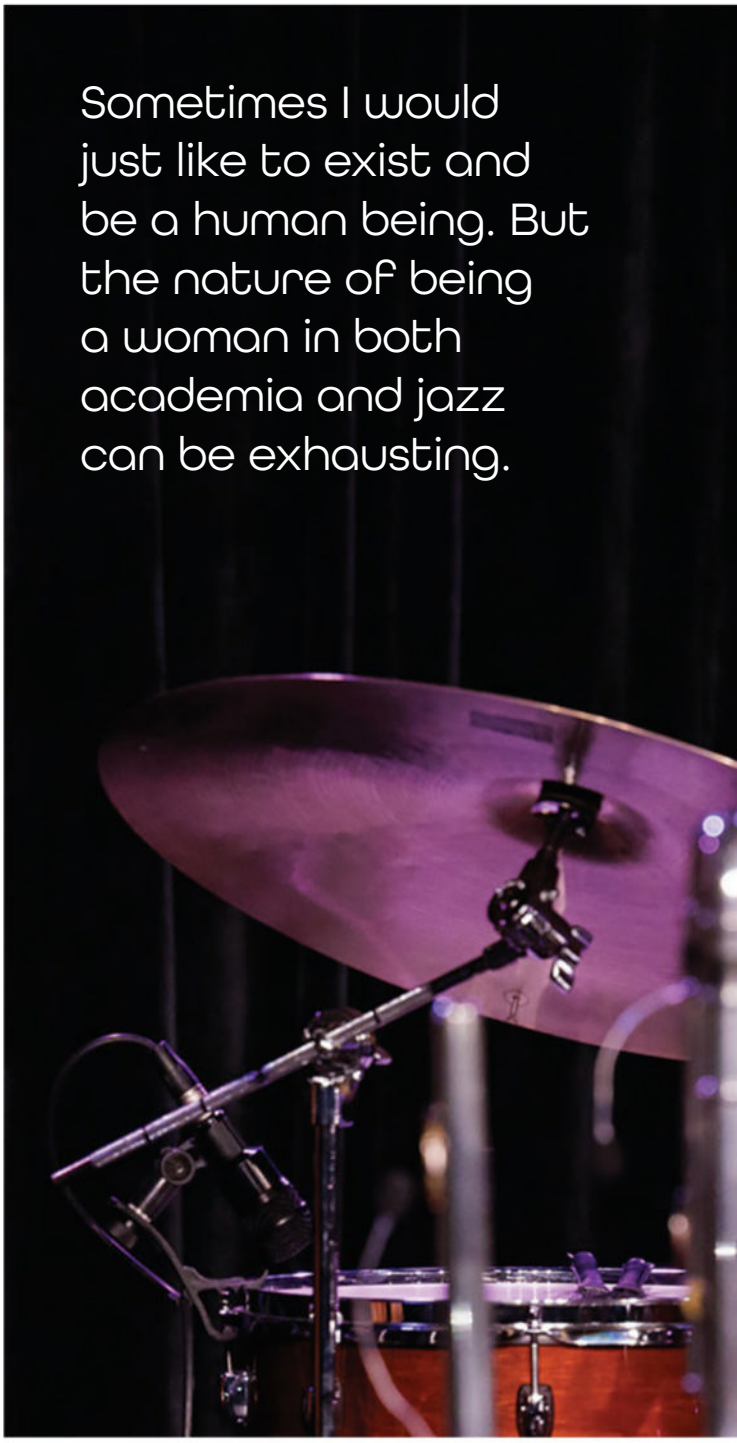
TR: Creating really clear boundaries. I just recently got a second cell phone for school because my students were calling and texting at 11:00 at night on Sundays. I said, "I love you guys, but I need space too." Now I have this other phone that I can turn off and it's amazing. Learning to set clear boundaries has been a game changer for me. My students know that I will be 100% there for them when I can, and when I can't, I can turn that phone off. The nice thing about music and drumming is that no one is gonna die if I don't get back to them on Friday, it can wait until Monday. The more that I am conscious of that and accept that, and I don't open my email on weekends; the much better and happier I am, and I'm a better teacher and a better human being to be around.

MD: Let's move on to Tina Raymond *the musician*. I haven't heard your first record, but your newest record is phenomenal.

TR: I made my first record six or eight years ago, it is called *Left, Right, Left,* and was inspired by a political shift. I took a bunch of protest songs from American history and rearranged (or deranged) them. Another person I have been fortunate to work with was Art Lande, who's a great pianist and improv guru. I met him in Cincinnati at a master class and spent a lot of time with him at Cal Arts. I told him that I wanted to make a record with him, and I wanted to hear him play "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" with a 12-tone row underneath it. That was the beginning of that record, and it expanded from there. The trio of Art, bassist Putter Smith, and I did some Joni Mitchell and some Joan Baez music. I think it's a good example of a "first record." There are definitely limitations in my writing and my arranging, as a drummer it's sometimes hard to get a message across because we're not playing the melody or the harmony. But I think I did a good job of taking songs that people might know and expressing them in a different way. We did a Woody Guthrie tune that is a labor union anthem called "Union Maid" and used it to express a woman's strife in the workforce. I wanted to express how tiring it is to constantly be taking one for the team and putting yourself at the front of the line. Sometimes I would just like to exist and be a human being. But the nature of being a woman in both academia and jazz can be exhausting.

MD: I heard a distinct 1967-1971 era Tony Williams influence on your new record *Divinations*. That may be because of (guitarist) Andrew Renfroe's tone, but I hear a lot of Tony Williams *Emergency!* in this record, am I wrong?

TR: I love those records for sure! That wasn't conscious, but I hear what you are saying. It's hard to hear your own music and



compare your own voice to anything or anyone. I can't negate that I love Tony, and I was definitely playing a lot of drums, but I was just writing tunes and playing to represent my energetic state. There is a fundamental joyfulness that playing the drums can express and making the drums a primary voice in each composition was what I was exploring on this record. The drum language was part of each composition, and the drum solos were melodic and played over the changes of the tune. I wanted this record to be drum centric, so I had a voice, and I think that was very true in the Lifetime band as well. That band and Tony had such a strong voice, that's what I was going after. I was always telling the engineer to bump up the drums.

When we were finally getting out of the terrible time of the pandemic, a friend of mine started a tarot card side-hustle business and anytime we would get together she would do readings for me. It was such a fun and whimsical experience to have these readings, and whether you believe in fortune telling, that is beside the point. For me, the interesting thing was my response to what she was saying. That was the most revealing part. I became inspired to take the beautiful imagery and beautiful words that are on all these different tarot card decks and just write some music with those images and words as my boundaries. My intention was to get away from the seriousness of life and politics and just have a fun creative project, that was

Jim Levitt

the starting point for the compositions.

Inherently if you do a guitar trio record, you're going to get compared to a lot of fusion records. One comment about this record was, "With a more *regimented drummer* this would be a great fusion record," *whatever*… It's funny, there's definitely rock'n'roll influence on this record, I think the nature of having Renfroe brings that. But I ended up writing all this music on the piano. I would improvise on the piano off a phrase I read on a card. And sometimes as a trio we would get together and freely improvise off those phrases from the cards, after a while we had some good ideas for tunes.

MD: Where did the tune "The Emperor" come from? You are tearing it up on that.

TR: Thank you! That tune is about boundaries and having absolute power with restraint. It goes back to being in a position of overseeing a lot of people and the pressure that you feel to appease everyone and to make everyone happy. At a certain point you throw your hands up knowing that someone is going to be upset with any decision that is made, but you can't do any more. It's about saying to yourself, this is what I'm comfortable with and here are my boundaries. That was the state I was in when I was writing that tune, and that is a state that I find myself in quite a bit in the position as a director of a collegiate jazz program.

MD: What about the tune "Swainson's Hawk?"

TR: The Swainson Hawk is a bird that is found in central California. I was just thinking of these Hawks that kind of swoop and move with agility through the air, they're so powerful but graceful. That was the energy I was playing with on that tune. I was definitely pulling in some African rhythms and polyrhythms

Brian Bixby

Harvey S. Tillis

on that one. The melody for that song came to me while I was walking my dog.

MD: What is your overall composition process like?

TR: I gravitate towards basslines. You hear that a lot on both of my records. There were a lot of arrangements where my ears just went to the basslines. I will frequently start there. For the most part, I write at the piano. There's been a few melodies that through divine intervention have popped in my head, it's lovely when that happens but it's not always the way. Lots of times I start with basslines, head to the piano, do a voice memo, then play and improvise over it to find something else. Writing is such a finicky muse. For one of the compositions, I took the Seven of Wands (tarot card) and let it inspire a melody. The inspiration behind "Ace of Pentacles" was that Karl McComas-Reichl is such a beautiful bassist, why hadn't I given him a single melody to play? In the Esthesis Quartet, I wrote a song that was based off a Mary Oliver poem.

MD: What is the Esthesis Quartet about?

TR: That band evolved out of Covid as a "compositional support group**.**" It's a really fun group of musicians who made me feel safe in getting my compositions out there. We have released two records and there is a third coming in 2025 that features Bill Frisell.

MD: It's clear you have a lot of different approaches in your music and your drumming. How has all of it gelled to become your voice?

TR: If you listen to the records I did with Bobby Bradford or Vinnie Golia, they are another example of where I'm coming from as a musician. If you look at the complete portfolio of the work I've done with the Trio Subliminal, playing metal free jazz with Dan Rosenboom, the straight-ahead free jazz stuff I've done with Bobby Bradford, or the records with Vinny Golia that are just OUT! Then you'll see my new recording in complete context, and it will make more sense. But if you just start at this one record, you might think, "fusion adjacent" or *whatever*.

MD: Your drum sound is fantastic, what kind of drums and cymbals are you using?

TR: I'm using George Way drums made by Ronn Dunnett. When I tune, I try to honor the pitches of the shells, and I make sure that the shells are resonating. I'll tap the bottom of the shell and find the pitch and then I will tune the bottom head to that pitch. Then I will adjust the top head accordingly to the intervals I want between the heads and the drums.

My cymbals are Sabian Crescent series Jeff Hamilton's. A lot of my gear choices are very much in the lineage of Jeff. I use Jeff's sticks, and I use Remo Fiberskyn 3 Diplomats. I'm still using Regal Tip brushes; I have one more pair of Regal Tip brushes and I'm terrified to switch. I'm sure the new Innovative Percussion stuff is great; I just haven't tried them yet.

My snare drum is my classical Black Swamp Orchestral Philharmonic drum cranked crispy and crunchy with cable snares. The strainer on that Black Swamp drum is a strainer where you can have choice of different gauge cable and wire, and I really like the way that cable snares sound. I had

gotten this drum because I was studying to be an orchestral percussionist, and I had put it away for many years because I thought, why would I use an orchestral drum on my drum set? After a while I thought, "Why *wouldn't* I want to get that kind of clarity and sensitivity from my snare drum? It's nice at soft dynamics, the cable snares are actually exactly the sound that I want but can't get from wire snares.

MD: I use the Pearl version of that drum with the triple strainer, which has morphed into the Dennis Chambers signature drum. I like the fact that you can also put three sets of wire snares on it and disengage one or two of them to create a less "snarey" sound. I don't know why more people don't use orchestral snares on drum sets.

We have talked about all your teachers. But outside of your teacher's, who are some of your favorite drummers and recordings?

TR: Art Blakey *Caravan*, but can you name a bad Jazz Messenger record? He is also great on Hank Mobley *Soul Station*. Mel Lewis all day, all the time. *Art Pepper + 11,* and all the stuff he did with the Terry Gibbs Dream Band. There's a track called "The Fuzz" which is why I wanted to play music for the rest of my life. Of course, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and all that stuff, especially *Consummation.* Early on, Cindy Blackman and her record *Works on Canvas* was a huge inspiration, she sounds great on "Green Dolphin Street." Philly Joe Jones on all the Miles Prestige recordings, I spent a lot of time with those especially working with students. That's just fundamental language. I was just listening to an all-star *Live at Newport* record with Roy Haynes. His intense comping aesthetic of being so incredibly interactive but not in the way is a huge inspiration. Then there's Max Roach, I could go on and on…

I grew up listening to a lot of Matt Chamberlain. I was really into Tori Amos and he played on so much of that music. Texturally I'm really inspired by his concept of sound. There are different schools of drummers. There's the "time people" and there's the "texture people." Texturally I think Matt's just brilliant. All the stuff he did with Tori is brilliant, the work he did with Fiona Apple on *When the Pawn…* is amazing too.

Like I said earlier, a lot of students unfortunately don't go and see their teachers play, but I did. When I moved to California, I took every opportunity to go and see Jeff Hamilton and Joe LaBarbera play. Seeing Jeff play with his trio was very revealing, it was wonderful to see how it all fits together. Whenever Jeff came through town, I was going to see him play, and it was the same with Joe. Seeing them and being able to ask them questions about their processes, has been invaluable. It was the same with Von Ohlen, seeing how he controls the band, develops the band, supports the band, that's what it's all about.

MD: You have also done a good deal of free and avant-garde playing with Bobby Bradford and Vinnie Golia, how has the avant-garde influenced you?

TR: I listened to a lot of Bobby Bradford and John Carter, and I was lucky enough to make Bobby's last record which is a tribute to Jackie Robinson. That approach to music helps in your understanding of what it means to be "in the moment." It helps remove the filter of "and now I'm going to do this," and teaches you to just respond authentically in the moment. You can take that concept from the free approach and move it into other styles of music by learning how to authentically react in the moment. Another thing with a lot of young players is that they have a veil over their playing, and they are thinking "now I'm going to play *the jazz.*" They should have an authentic ownership of their music, so they're expressing something true. I really started to understand that from playing free music.

MD: Don't you feel that is a part of removing your brain from the process and just being you, which (strangely) can be very difficult. Do you think there's a lot of younger people who are thinking too much and that is removing them from the process?

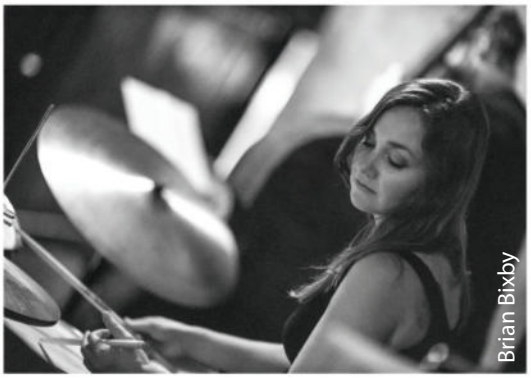
TR: I think it's letting go of trying to prove that "you can play." And that just comes from getting out of an environment where you're constantly trying to prove that you've done your homework, instead of just accepting and stating "this" is how I play.

MD: What other avant-garde music has made a big impression on you as a musician?

TR: Ornette. I think if you go back and listen to a lot of the earlier Ornette stuff, it's actually not that "out." They are playing form. It gets out there with the album *Free Jazz,* but if you go back to *The Shape of Things to Come* and *This is Our Music,* it's very palatable and very structured, and in context. Avant-garde music teaches you to be open to where things can go. But those are also the fundamental "rules" of jazz, "*These* are the rules until they're *not*." Or "These are the rules, *learn* them and then *break* them."

I was very fortunate to study with Charlie Haden at Cal Arts, I got to play "Lonely Woman" with Charlie, which was incredible. I was very fortunate that Charlie liked my playing, there were times when I wasn't in his class anymore and I'd be in a different class and someone would come in and say, "Hey Tina, Charlie wants you to come and play with him." Charlie was an angel with students. I know he had the reputation of being quite difficult

In my writing process, it's not inherent that I'm a straight-ahead jazz drummer. It's also not inherent that I'm a free jazz player. Maybe I'm not even leaning into either or both of those parts of my playing, I don't know…


Brian Bixby

professionally, but he was such a joy to be in a room with as a student. His classes were like "Hang Time with Charlie." He'd put on a symphony, or the latest recording he had done with Lee Konitz, and just crank up the music like a little kid. Then you'd play, and he'd say something incredibly abstract and profound like, "You see the mountains over there, you gotta play like you're the mountains!" He was just so giving of his time and so patient with students in a way that was counter to his reputation as a professional.

MD: Talk to the young girls who are just getting started playing drums out there, because there is a lot of them. And talk to the women who are trying to make a name for themselves in the music business.

TR: I feel very fortunate to live in Los Angeles, it is a very inclusive and accepting environment. I know that everywhere is not the same as LA. When I am touring in the Midwest, or even if I'm a in a smaller California city outside of LA, I'm reminded of how progressive an environment I'm living in. But it was a huge struggle when I was doing my undergrad work in the Midwest, and when I was younger. Now that I'm older and I'm more established, people know me in this community. Also, when you're older, you just don't care what people think, that's part of getting older too. I don't want to devalue anyone else who is going through it, they just have to know that it's not that way forever, and your environment can absolutely change your experience. If someone is having problems, they can try putting themself into a community that is more inclusive, that was paramount for me. However, I must say that it's (almost) never the musicians. When I was living in Cincinnati, if I had a nickel every time someone said, "Oh, a female drummer, *how unusual*…" I felt like saying, "Is it really? I don't think so!" But being in Los Angeles I rarely think about it.

MD: What advice would you give a younger person that was contemplating a career in music that was living in (for example) your old hometown where you grew up?

TR: This is a business of relationships, at a certain point everyone can play, but it's about being a supportive participating member of a community. My advice to students trying to work professionally is to find the community that you want to work in, and then invest in it. Go to people's shows, go to the jam sessions, introduce yourself, give what you can to a community of musicians, and if it's a genuine investment, you will almost always get it back.

MD: What's coming up for you?

TR: I have a lot of adjudication things coming up in the in the coming weeks. I'll be at the University of Northern Colorado Jazz Festival, I'll be at the Reno Jazz Festival, I'm doing a guest spot at an All-City High School thing in Burbank… there's a lot of teaching stuff in the next few months. The time that I carve out to be creative is the summer because I'm not teaching. So this summer, I'm looking forward to writing a bunch of new music and putting together the next project. However, when you're putting music together, you're thinking about things that may or may not come to fruition. In my writing process, it's not inherent that I'm a straight-ahead jazz drummer. It's also not inherent that I'm a free jazz player. Maybe I'm not even leaning into either or both of those parts of my playing, I don't know… we'll see…

Check out Tina's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

WHOM GODS DESTROY'S BRUNO VALVERDE

FROM MARACATU TO METAL

BY MARK GRIFFITH

Brazil is known for its rhythmic contributions to the music world. In music you can't ignore the Brazilian styles of Samba, Bossa Nova, and Maracatu. But recently Brazil's contribution to Heavy Metal drumming has been overwhelming with drummers like Igor Cavalera, Aquiles Priester, Eloy Casagrande, and now Bruno Valverde. For Bruno it began when Megadeth guitarist Kiko Loureiro asked him to play some gigs in Brazil with his trio. Later, Kiko asked Bruno to join the band Angra and record their eighth album called *Secret Garden*. Italian fusion guitarist Fabrizio Bicio Leo came calling and included Valverde on his record *Spectrum of My Past*. Now Bruno Valverde has joined the band Whom Gods Destroy led by Derek Sherinian and Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal and is featured on their new record *Insanium*. Whom Gods Destroy's music is melodic, progressive, and heavy, and Bruno Valverde shines throughout on *Isanium*. Bruno moved to LA right before the Covid lockdown, and his schedule is filling up. He has also been recording drums for video games for Sony and Marvel. But how does a young drummer from Brazil wind up taking the metal and progressive rock world by storm?

Paula Mordente

MD: You came to America in 2019 from Brazil, but what was your musical and drumming background in Brazil?
BV: It was weird, I had dreamed of coming to the U.S. for a long time, I got my visa, and then I moved here right before Covid hit and everything got locked down. So I got a lockout practice room here in LA and began practicing.

I started playing drums in Brazil at nine years old. I started playing Brazilian genres of music with my first teacher named Lenilson Silva. He was into Samba, so I started playing that music with him. We didn't work on that much rudimental stuff, just singles and doubles. We would play a lot of combinations of singles and doubles over Samba grooves and foot patterns. Actually, Eloy Casagrande and I had the same teacher and studied at the same church, so we have been friends for a long time. After five years of playing, I started to study with Pipe Joares and doing the Systems from Gary Chester *The New Breed* and I finally got *Stick Control*.

MD: Did you do the vocal parts of the systems? Many people skip that step.
BV: Yes, the counting and the singing part of the systems helped me a lot.
MD: What type of music were you listening to at that time?

AFTER FIVE YEARS OF PLAYING, I STARTED TO STUDY WITH PIPE JOARES AND DOING THE SYSTEMS FROM GARY CHESTER THE NEW BREED AND I FINALLY GOT STICK CONTROL.

BV: I grew up in church, so I heard a lot of gospel music along with a lot of Brazilian Samba and Bossa Nova. Later, I began to listen to rock and modern music that was happening at the time. I began to mix Samba, Rock, Gospel while I listened to all the great American drummers, but I didn't listen to much American classic rock. My teacher showed me videos of Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Dave Weckl, Simon Phillips, and Vinnie Colaiuta. Then I started to get into the fusion music of Tony Williams and Allan Holdsworth with Gary Husband and Chad Wackerman. Tony Williams New Lifetime *Believe It* was everything to me for a long time. But Dave Weckl *Hard Wired* changed everything for me. Then Chick Corea *Electric Band II* with Gary Novak was a favorite for a while. I was listening to Tribal Tech a lot too. For a long time, Prog and Fusion music was my life. It's funny because I grew up listening to Derek Sherinian playing in Planet X with Virgil Donati, and after 20 years of playing the drums, I got a call from Derek Sherinian to join Whom Gods Destroy.

MD: I'm a huge fan of Brazilian music and all the Samba School recordings, how did studying that music lead to Prog and Fusion?
BV: Every year after Carnival happens in February, that is when our year starts. That is how important Carnival

João Marcos Coelho

Alex Kluft

and the Samba Schools are. Brazilian music and grooves are always on the upbeat. Here in America, it's different. It's all about the downbeat here. In America so much of the funk music is on the downbeat, and the grooves are more laid back. In Brazil, we are pushing the groove and maybe rushing a bit. It's always done in a good way, but we are naturally pushing and rushing the time. Samba, Carnival, and Samba Schools require that. In the Samba Schools you learn how to rush the time (in a good way) or play on top of the beat. When you mix the upbeat feel of Brazilian music with the downbeat feel of rock, it is easier to play fusion. It's a good thing to mix music.

MD: Explain to us what the experience of participating in Samba School is like?

BV: Each school is like a team, you join a school and rehearse, and then you compete during Carnival. People have their favorite schools, and the root for them, it's like a sport. That experience is amazing for the drumming community. I think Samba School is sort of how the drum set started in our culture. We have a lot of different instruments, our small high-pitched drums are like the snare drum, the floor tom is kind of like our Surdo, and people are playing tambourines, which is like a hi-hat. The drummers are all playing their own rhythms which is how I think it was before the drum set was invented. We gather on a big avenue (street) and for two hours everybody plays a lot of drums and grooves There are three big Samba Schools today one in Sao Paulo, Rio, and Recife', but there are many smaller ones. Sao Paulo and Rio have a similar approach to Samba, but in Recife' you have the Maracatu which is one of the most amazing rhythms, genres, and grooves that I have ever heard. In Maracatu, people are dancing to a rhythm which is all about the upbeat. The foundation of Maracatu are high pitched drums cutting through everything and playing on the second and fourth 16th note (the "e" and the "a".) It is crazy to see people dancing to that because it's so different, but that's good.

MD: When you were "welcomed" to the United States by Covid lockdown, got your practice room and started practicing more, what were you practicing?

BV: I used to play traditional grip, but in the pandemic, I decided to switch to matched grip. I was playing traditional

IT'S FUNNY BECAUSE I GREW UP LISTENING TO DEREK SHERINIAN PLAYING IN PLANET X WITH VIRGIL DONATI, AND AFTER 20 YEARS OF PLAYING THE DRUMS, I GOT A CALL FROM DEREK SHERINIAN TO JOIN WHOM GODS DESTROY.

grip for 18 years and then I just switched. It's been challenging to match all the dynamics that I had with traditional. I want to develop all the dynamics I had with traditional grip with matched grip. To accomplish this, I practiced maybe four or five hours a day, only working on my dynamics. With that switch I did discover some stuff to speed up the process. I knew *what* I wanted to play, but the mechanics were not there. Then I started to play more open handed, and I was playing Samba 16th notes with my left hand, now my matched grip is much better, and my brain has opened more. The technique has translated to more vocabulary to the drums, now I'm really working on my left hand because of that new vocabulary that I have developed.

MD: You have mentioned Dave Weckl a few times, what is it about Dave's drumming that you like?

BV: My first impression and exposure to Dave was the Buddy Rich Tribute video. The second song that Dave played with the solo at the beginning, that solo was a masterpiece. I was 13 years old at the time, and I got Dave's *Natural Evolution* video after that. I spent 4-5 hours a day watching that video. My English is not *great* today, but at the time I didn't speak *any* English. But I know every word from that video. That was when I originally changed from matched grip to traditional, I just wanted to play like Dave Weckl. Unfortunately, I didn't have the help of Freddy Gruber or Jim Chapin, and I got into a little trouble with my wrists hurting.

MD: You not only learned drumming and technique from drum videos, but you learned to speak English from drum videos. That's pretty cool. How did your drumming evolution continue after Dave?

BV: After Dave's videos, I moved on to studying Virgil's videos. I started to learn about the different time signatures and technique, I was trying to expand my endurance and stamina on drums. Virgil was a different approach from Dave Weckl and Virgil. I spent a lot of time on the endurance and the power drumming where Virgil teaches the different accent patterns and talks about all the dynamics that are possible really helped me. The next thing I did was the double stroke rolls on the bass drums. That helps you develop your left foot, I found that when you can lead with your left foot you can expand your independence, which is always a good thing to develop.

Raoni Correia

SAO PAULO AND RIO HAVE A SIMILAR APPROACH TO SAMBA, BUT IN RECIFE' YOU HAVE THE MARACATU WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING RHYTHMS, GENRES, AND GROOVES THAT I HAVE EVER HEARD. IN MARACATU, PEOPLE ARE DANCING TO A RHYTHM WHICH IS ALL ABOUT THE UPBEAT.

MD: How did the stuff you studied when you were younger prepare you for what you were studying from Dave and Virgil's videos?

BV: For me, it felt like a natural evolution. I always like loved practicing the drums, I love to be challenged. To this day, there's something really fun about sitting at the drums and practicing. I think I like practicing more than anything else I do with music; I just love to practice drums! It's never easy, but I love it.

MD: In Brazil, did you come up playing in bands?

BV: Yes, I play in the metal band Angra. I was playing in church and Kiko (from Megadeth) called me. He also has his own instrumental trio. He saw a video of me playing the Virgil stuff and asked me to play some shows with him in Brazil. He had already done a recording with Virgil, and I started playing with Kiko in his trio. Two years after that Kiko called me to play in Angra, I'm still with Angra, I did the record *Secret Garden*, *OMNI*, and *Cycles of Pain*, and I just recorded Kiko's new solo album that will be out soon. I actually did Kiko's record and the Whom Gods Destroy record in the same month.

MD: Tell me about how Whom Gods Destroy came about?

BV: A while back Derek Sherinian told me about this project, but he didn't talk about much, I think it was like a secret because Sons of Apollo was still going. Six months later I got another call from Derek about joining Whom Gods Destroy, the demo was already done with entirely programmed drums. Ron and Derek are geniuses because the drum programming was amazing on the demos. I learned the songs and the arrangements, and I was free to put my personality on the interpretation of the songs, and I did the record. If I had played something too crazy, I'm sure they would have said something. But I was sure to stay within the parameters of the

I'M STILL WITH ANGRA, I DID THE RECORD SECRET GARDEN, OMNI, AND CYCLES OF PAIN, AND I JUST RECORDED KIKO'S NEW SOLO ALBUM THAT WILL BE OUT SOON. I ACTUALLY DID KIKO'S RECORD AND THE WHOM GODS DESTROY RECORD IN THE SAME MONTH.

Alex Kluft

music.
MD: Did they ever have to pull you back in because something you played was "too crazy?"
BV: There was one song that I did some crazy stuff, but I didn't know there was going to be a melody or a vocal thing in there. They told me to pull back just a bit because there was going to be a melody going in there. Had I have known that I wouldn't have played what I did, but everything turned out OK.
MD: Are you always being careful not to play anything crazy over a vocal melody?

Alex Kluft

BV: I try to not play complicated drum parts when the vocalist is singing a melody. You must respect the main message of the song, you'll have your time to play, it's not a workshop or a drum clinic. You gotta be patient sometimes. There is a Dennis Chambers quote that I love. He says, "Let space be space." It is so simple, but so deep. I love that quote.
MD: How do you approach creating drum parts when there is already a programmed part?
BV: It depends on the project. With Whom Gods Destroy, they are calling because I have a personality on the drums. I must interpret everything through my personality, but with Ron, Dino, and Derek everything was so on point and the programming was so good, that I stuck pretty close to my interpretation of the programmed parts.
MD: What percentage of what you played came from the programmed parts, and what percentage came from you?
BV: I think about 60% of what was played came from the programming on the demos, and about 40% was my own interpretation. I was new coming into the project. I grew up listening to Planet X, so being with these guys is a dream come true. I'm so happy working with these guys, we already started tracking some new stuff with Derek and it's been amazing.
MD: What are some of your favorite tunes on *Insanium*?
BV: "Hyper Nova 158" is good stuff. I love playing fives in my drumming. I like the interpretation of that song. I like "Crawl" because Dino crushed the melodies on that. I like that one because it's a great song, because the chorus is really strong. "In the Name of War" is the first one that I recorded, and it has some five and six in the chorus. The great thing about Whom Gods Destroy is it's a good mix of instrumental stuff and good melodies, but without being too busy. When you have the melodies and the grooves you know it's good, but when you can add amazing instrumental parts as well, the entire musical mix becomes really great.
MD: I think the band sounds great. The music isn't "too heavy," but it's not too "proggy" or too "poppy." It's aggressive, but not over the top. The melodies are fantastic, and the playing is world class. What more can you ask for?
BV: Thanks!
MD: What have you learned from Derek and Ron (Bumblefoot) in the process of working with them?
BV: The great thing about them is that they know everything that's happening. They have good ears. During "In the Name of War" I did a three over five polyrhythm while I kept the same foundation of the groove and backbeat. When I did that, they heard it and they liked it. Sometimes you do some cool "drummer's stuff" and nobody even notices. But they heard it and mentioned liking it. Ron has such a great way of playing complicated riffs. They are complex, but he makes them sound so simple and easy.
MD: Had you and the bassist Yas Nomura played together before?
BV: No, we've never played before, but we knew each other. He's actually a great guitar player and a composer as well. He plays the complicated stuff and really makes it his own.
MD: When you are playing denser music as you are quite often in Whom Gods Destroy, how do you and Yas stay out of each other's way, and not step on each other's toes?
BV: When you develop more maturity you learn to respect your and someone else's space. You must respect the foundation. If the bass drum is doing something, the bass player is gonna follow, but you can discuss what is the best thing for that part. Neither the drummer nor bassist is gonna dictate a part, but together you'll come up with a good idea. How you get together in the pocket, and how you play together, depends on the style. Whether you are playing a lot of notes or not a lot of notes, you must play together.
MD: Who else have you been playing with since you moved to the US?
BV: I have been playing with a Brazilian guitarist name Rafael Moreira who has played with Christina Aguilera and Pink, he has some instrumental fusion pop funk music and we did some

gigs at the Baked Potato which was a dream come true as well. I watched Allan Holdsworth play there several times, so playing there was really cool. When I was playing with Rafael, Richie Kotzen came in. Richie was working on a project with Adrian Smith from Iron Maiden called Smith-Kotzen and he asked me to join them on their California and United Kingdom tour.

MD: What kind of drums and cymbals are you playing?

BV: I play Pearl drums, Sabian cymbals, 2B ProMark sticks, and Evans. I use Evans G2 clears on toms, the EMAD Heavyweight on the bass drums, and the Heavyweight Dry on the snare drum. I have a few Pearl sets, I have a Masters MCT set, a Reference Pure set, and a Music City Custom set. I just got my new Reference One set, and I'm really excited about them. I love the Reference Pure which are almost the same shells as the Reference One. The thickness and the mix of the woods on the Pearl Reference shells are perfect for basically everything, they are so versatile for everything. I use a 10, 12, 16, 18, and a 14 on my left. I use a 22" bass drum, and a 5 ½ x 14 Sensitone snare.

MD: What cymbals are you using?

BV: I have been playing Sabian for a long time. I am using the 14" and 15" Artisan hi-hats, I love the new reissue of the Todd Sucherman 22" ride, I am using the HHX and Artisan Crashes in 18, 19, and 20. But 19" crashes hit the sweet spot for me. I also use the Max Stacks, a 7" Evolution Splash, and I love the 19" Holy China.

THE THICKNESS AND THE MIX OF THE WOODS ON THE PEARL REFERENCE SHELLS ARE PERFECT FOR BASICALLY EVERYTHING, THEY ARE SO VERSATILE FOR EVERYTHING.

MD: How do you like recording drums to video game music?

BV: The tunes are so complicated; they have a lot of very different parts. Many times, the song is like 10 minutes long. One minute is crazy drum stuff and the next minute is really calm and chill.

MD: When you are presented with those tunes, were you reading charts, or was the stuff all programmed out?

BV: All the music was very well charted out. They would give me some guidance with some fills, specific bass drum parts, and arrangements. But I was free to put my personality into the situation as well.

MD: What drummers are you listening to today?

BV: I like Mark Guiliana and Nate Smith a lot, for the gospel type stuff, Eric Moore and Chris Coleman are amazing.

MD: Is When Gods Destroy going to tour?

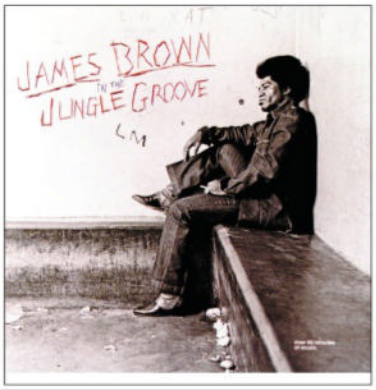
BV: Everybody in the band has a lot of projects. I am also going out on tour with Angra this year. But next year will be the year for a lot of touring with Whom Gods Destroy. This year we are presenting the band, and next year we'll hit the road. I can't wait!

Check out Bruno's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com

Paula Mordente

James Brown: The Funky Drummer, Clyde Stubblefield

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

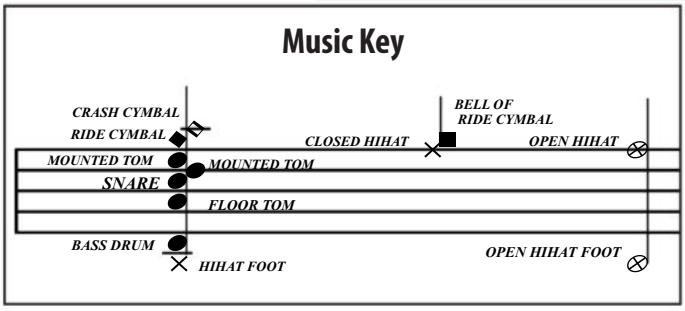


When Tower of Power asked, "What is Hip?" Clyde Stubblefield answered! Grooves don't get much hipper than this. Recorded in 1969, released in 1970, and again on CD in 1986, "The Funky Drummer" from the album *In The Jungle Groove* is Clyde's Sistine Chapel—a masterpiece of pure perfection.

The band originally went in to record another great James Brown track. As was typical, James dictated the arrangement as they played. The groove felt so good halfway through that he decided on the spot to title the song after the drummer laying down the funk.

To say this drum groove was influential is an understatement. It has been sampled more than any other recording on the planet, influencing every funk drummer from David Garibaldi to Dennis Chambers. It undoubtedly deserves a spot in the top five drum grooves of all time. I defy you not to tap your foot or move your head when this song is on.

This transcription captures the subtleties of this beat from start to finish. Clyde Stubblefield gradually enhances the groove by opening the hi-hat and varying the snare and accents throughout. It fits perfectly, making it, in my opinion, the ideal drum groove. Good luck maintaining 16th notes on the hi-hat for over nine minutes while keeping it feeling great. Despite the challenge, it's completely worth it, as playing along to this song will significantly improve your timing, feel, and hand technique. It's a fun one to play. So here is "The Funky Drummer Parts 1 and 2" and in the immortal words of James Brown, "Don't turn it loose. Just keep what you've got! Because it's a mother!"



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Marc Atkinson, a dedicated musician, honed his craft under the guidance of the renowned Gary Chaffee. Now calling Las Vegas home, Marc is on the brink of unveiling his labor of love—a comprehensive transcription book that promises to captivate music enthusiasts worldwide.

Check out Marc's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

Buzz Roll Studies: 8th Notes with Buzz Rolls

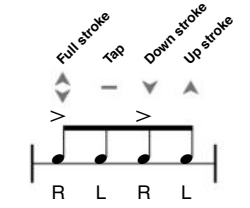
By Joe Morello

In Joe Morello's book *Master Studies*, he details different techniques to develop control on the drums. These exercises develop technique, control, and will help you develop different vocabulary from the different sounds we can produce with our hands. This chapter is not only about developing a good drum roll (buzz roll or long roll.) It is about using the sound of buzz strokes within your ideas to create new sounds and vocabulary. Some drummers that make great use of this sound are Roy Haynes, Ian Paice, Billy Higgins, Jimmy Chamberlin, Clyde Stubblefield, Adam Deitch, Bill Stewart, among *many* others.

Joe's important commentary on developing ideas is particularly appropriate to this section: "These patterns are not necessarily patterns you will use when playing, but you will be able to use the technique that you develop in any way you want. You may be able to hear a million 'hip' phrases in your mind, but if you can't get them out, they won't do you any good. So these exercises are created to give you the facility to play what you hear in your mind. These exercises may also stimulate your imagination, which will, in turn, develop your own creativity."

Going from single strokes to buzz (multiple rebound) strokes requires a different pressure, which is controlled primarily with the fingers. The important thing to remember here is that "pressure" does not mean "rigidity" or "tension." So these exercises, then, will help develop the sensitivity in the fingers that is necessary to control this pressure. You must be able to immediately apply the pressure when needed for a buzz, and then be able to immediately release it for single strokes. All of the following exercises can be played with a straight or swung eighth note. There are a variety of ways to play this section following are a few suggestions:

Arrow Notation Key



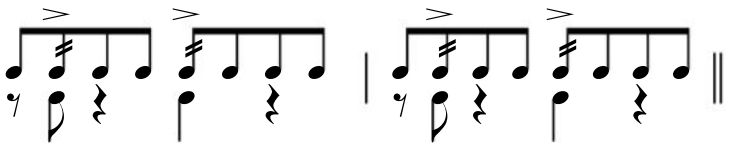
Up and down arrows	=	Full Stroke
Dash	=	Tap Stroke
Down arrow	=	Down Stroke
Up arrow	=	Up Stroke

This key is the same as used in the book *Accents and Rebounds* to show continuity in Joe's continuation of his teacher G.L. Stone.

Snare Drum or Pad Suggestions

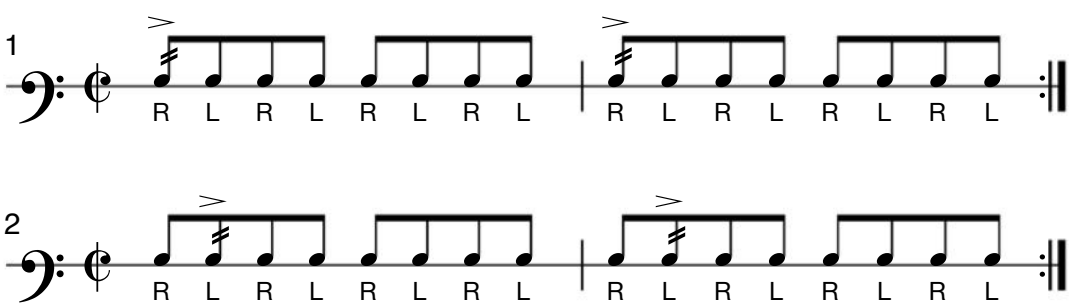
Play without accents.
Play the buzz notes as staccato as possible.
Play the buzz notes as legato as possible.
Play the buzz notes as double strokes.

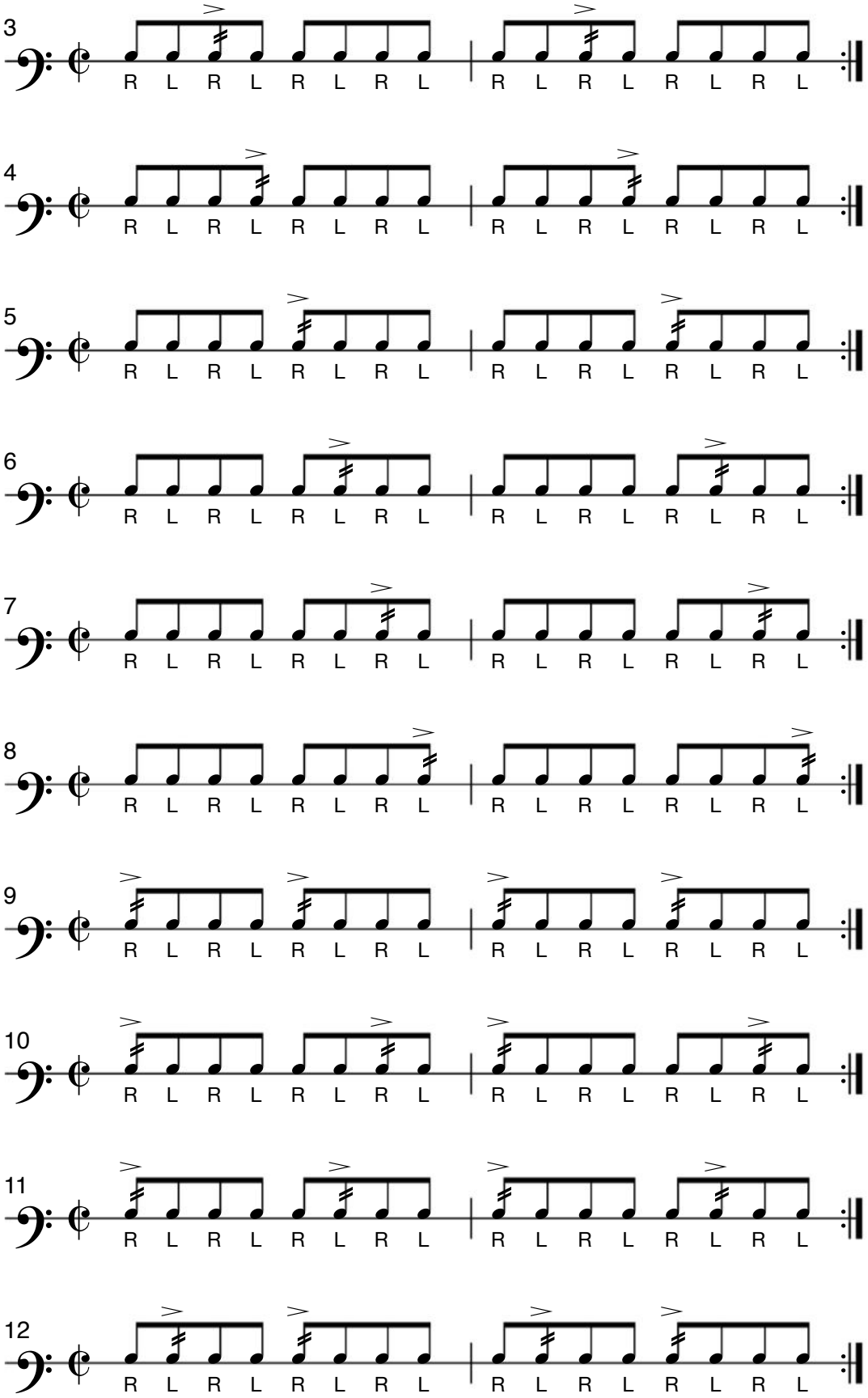
Drumset suggestions:
Accent buzz strokes with the bass drum.



Play buzz notes on tom-toms, getting a muffled effect by pressing the stick into the head.

Play buzz notes on snare drum; all others on tom-toms.

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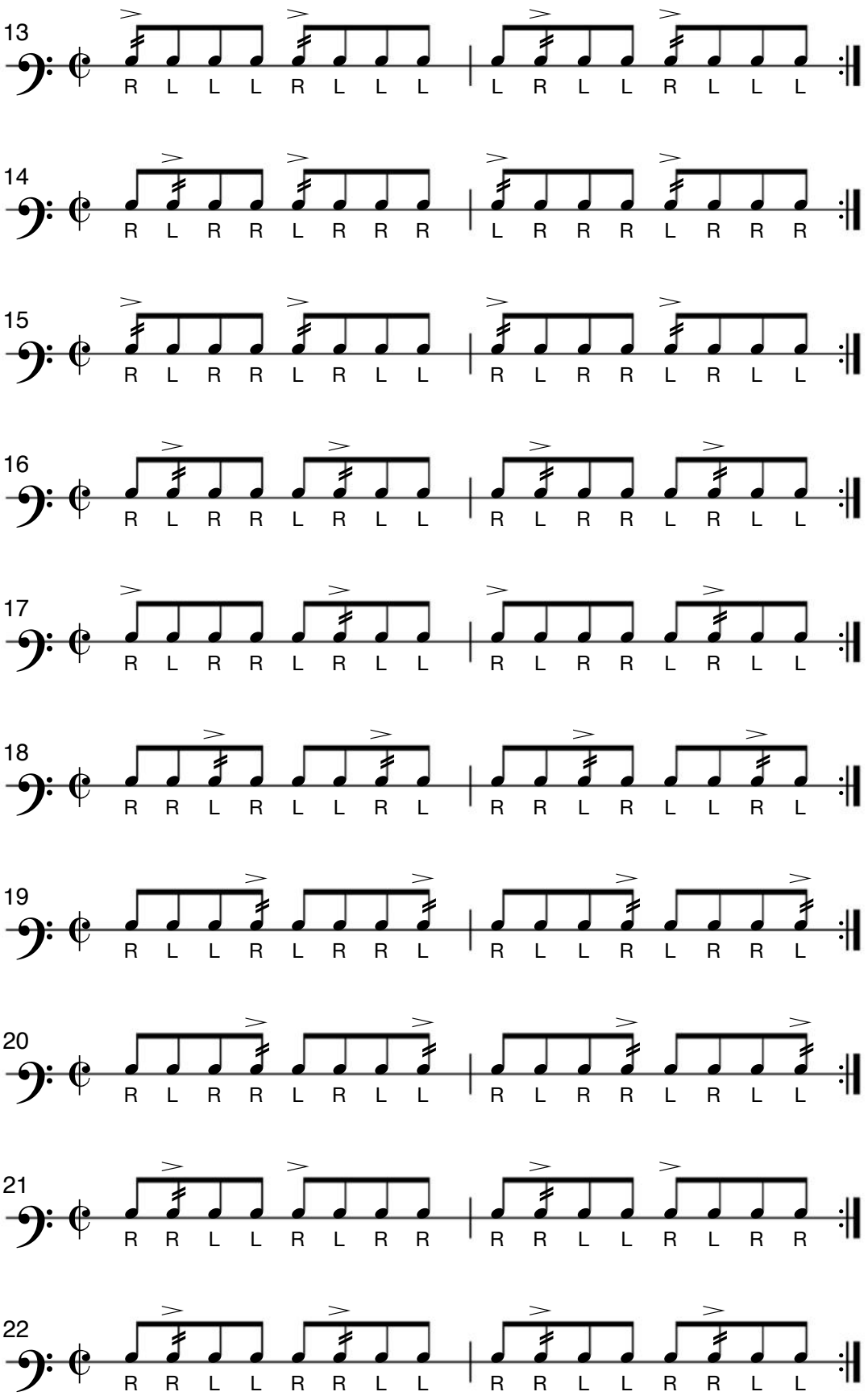
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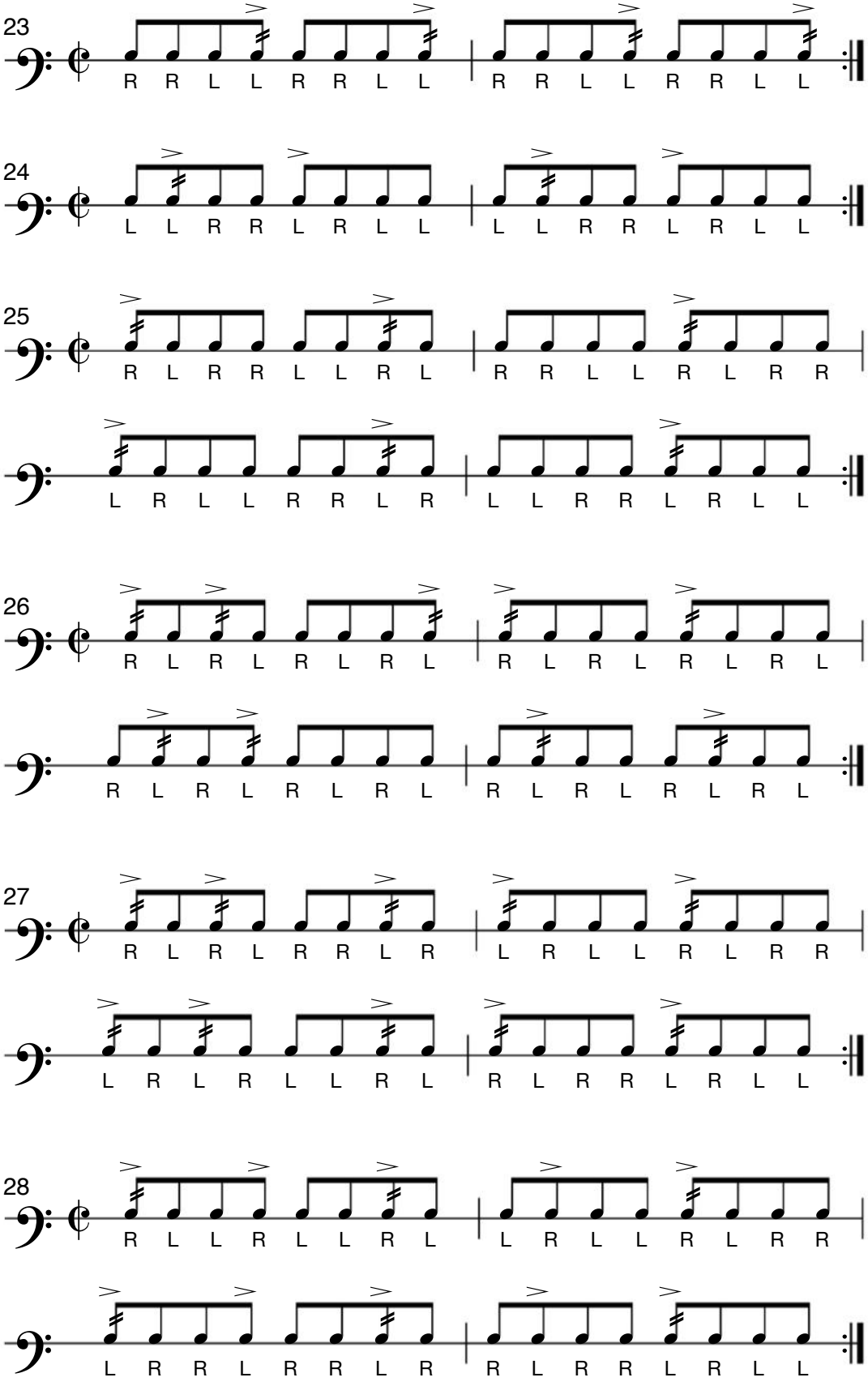
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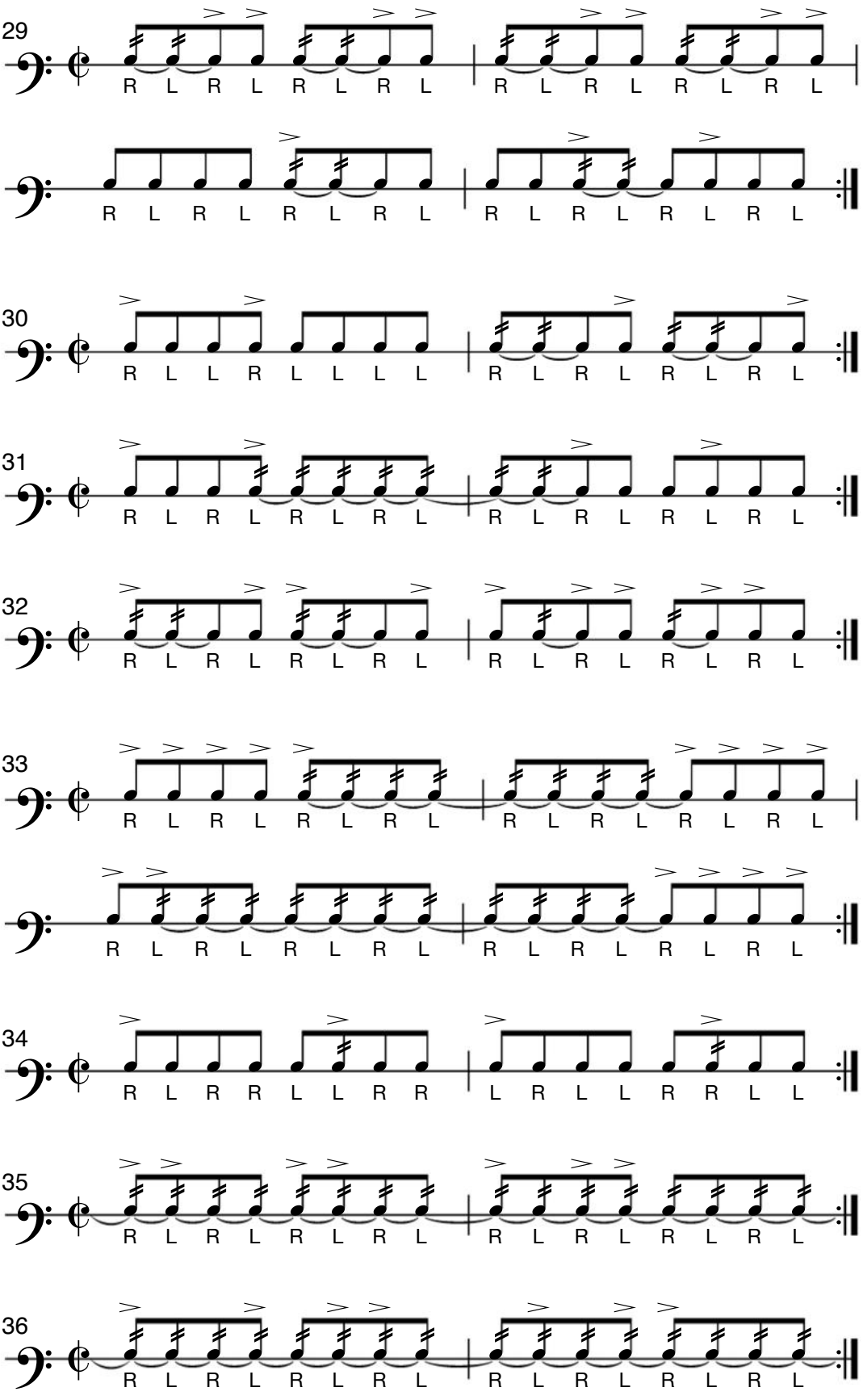

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Do All Drummers Have ADHD?

By Chris Lesso

Drummers all have one thing in common: we're passionate and energetic people! Energy and passion are a blessing and a superpower, but if they're not channeled through SYSTEMS, they run amok. I've heard so many drummers express that they think they have ADHD. I have a lot of those qualities too. Lightning-fast thinking, wanting to take on too much at once, getting distracted, jumping all over the place, doing too many things all at once, getting frustrated, extremely impatient... *sound familiar?* These qualities can become a superpower, but only with parameters. Like a raging river with boundaries to contain the fury, our energy must be focused.

This used to get the better of me. I'd get frustrated taking on too much. I'd move too fast. I'd take on more than I could handle. I'd be super impatient with those around me. This can become our ruin. I've seen it take many others down. To see ourselves as having a "disability" is a choice. I refuse to buy into that way of thinking. We all have superpowers and Kryptonite, but our superpowers can eminate from what sets us apart. When we take what was once a barrier and turn it into our fast track forward, the obstacle becomes the way. In any great story, there's always four roles: the Victim, the Villain, the Hero, and the Guide.

Sometimes I become all four roles in one day. But we always have a choice to *never* play the victim.

We have a drummer in the LTR DRUMMING community named Anne-Marie. Recently she told me, "I almost didn't make it because I had a spare 10 minutes and thought I'd read a few pages of a book I love, and I completely lost track of time." This is not someone who lacks focus, but someone that loves life! If you've ever seen the movie *Dead Poets Society* with Robin Williams, he shows the students an old black and white photo of students from long ago who were once just like them but were now dead and buried. We have one shot to live our legacy! With this long view perspective, he asks them, "How many of these boys went on to live a life of regret, never having 'sucked the marrow from life? Carpe Diem!" Seize The Day.

With great powers comes great responsibility, and it takes the discipline of focus to learn how to channel these powers. Anne-Marie also told me about her father and how he never learned this skill. One month he was learning how to play trumpet, then he'd be writing his novel, and then he was on to the next thing. He never followed through. Arambhashura is an ancient sanskrit word meaning "hero in the beginning." Have you ever started something and gave up two weeks later? (This happens to millions every year with New Year's resolutions, so you're not alone.) Passion and energy are great, we just have to play the LONG GAME, and not just be "heroes in the beginning."

You can live a lifetime and not get anything done. Never following through can be deadly, leading to toxic regret. To fight this, I choose to see this drive as a superpower. That drive is only a "dis-ability" if we choose to see it that way. Like that raging river with strong borders, raw excitement and energy must be focused. However, we need the right training to know what to delete, and sometimes we need help identifying the next step so we don't take too much on at once. We need the right community for motivation, and the accountability to dig deep and keep going when we most feel like giving up. The currency of the future will be FOCUS. Think of it as a muscle. The stronger it is, the more you and your drumming will flourish, and the better every aspect of your life will be. Passion can become focus! Your gifts can become superpowers or Kryptonite. We always have a choice. What's helped me focus my raw energy are these tools (I wish I had them sooner.)

- Written planners, with a clear plan
- Joining a community of positive people
- Knowing what to DELETE and when to say no!
- Reviewing and celebrating your progress
- Using SYSTEMS instead of goals

Are you ready to unleash your potential in drumming and life? Chris Lesso's LTR DRUMMING METHOD is for drummers who want to reach higher. If you're ready to live your best self through drumming, book your first free session at **chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING**

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

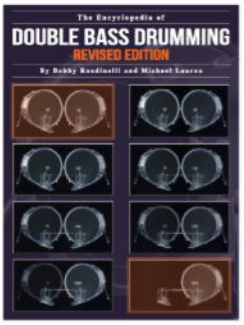
Eighth-Note Double Bass Drum Beats

By Bobby Rondinell

In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, "skiplets", beat turnarounds, the "ladder", and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet. These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today's music. This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in the book.

This month we are working on eighth note double bass drum beats. When played slow these beats can be a fantastic way to start to develop your double bass drum playing. When played FAST they are a challenge, and they sound really cool.

- Eighth note double bass is usually played at fast tempos.
- This chapter will be most helpful for beginning double bass drummers when played at slow tempos.
- The fills from the 16th note and eighth note triplet chapters will work great with all of the following beats.
- All beats can be played right or left foot lead



Beats

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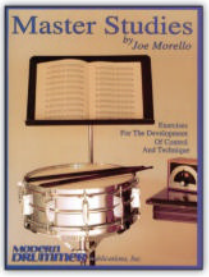

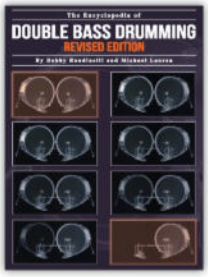

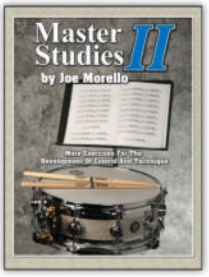

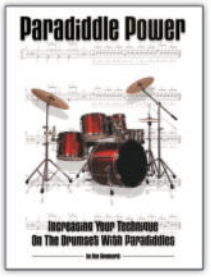

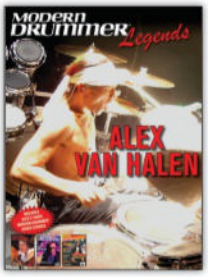

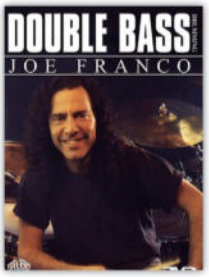

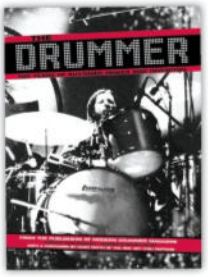

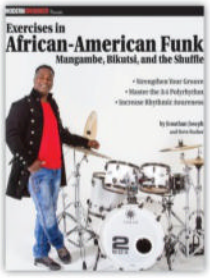

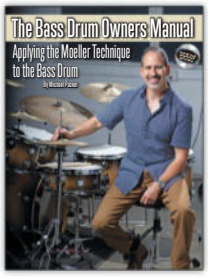

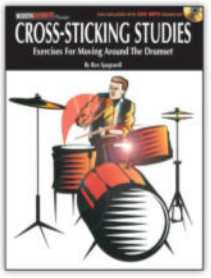

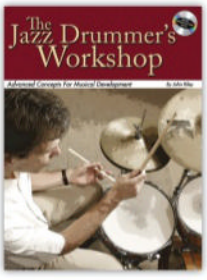

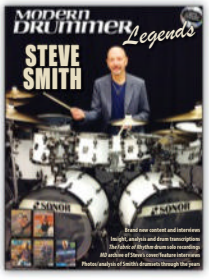

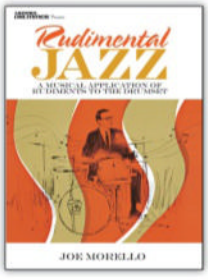

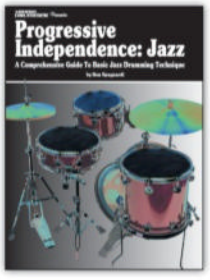

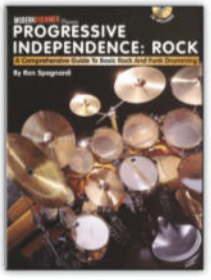

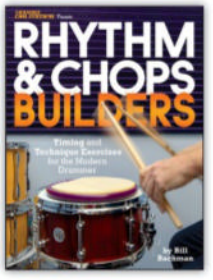

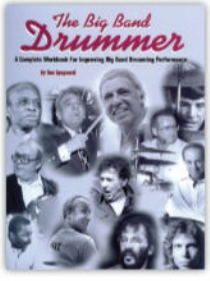

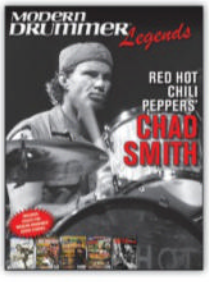

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The Bass Drum Owners Manual

Mastering the Art of Weight Distribution Part Two: Springless Practice

By Michael Packer

Welcome to the second installment on the topic of Mastering Weight Distribution, The Power of Springless Practice. What if I told you that you could enhance your bass drum technique by practicing without the spring on your pedal, or what I call *Springless* practice? In this article, we'll explore this unconventional yet highly effective method to elevate your bass drum skills to new heights.

You might be thinking; what? how? and most likely, why? For me, springless practice is like going to the dentist or eating squash. I hate them both but the benefits to my health and dental hygiene are simply too great and out way the discomfort. So, I suck it up and see my dentist four times a year and eat my squash. Springless practice is challenging but the benefits are incredible.

The Springless Pedal Advantage:

Once you can play the most common and foundational motions and rhythms on a springless pedal, you will have mastered the weight distribution and control necessary to play what you are attempting to play. The beauty is, once you put the spring back on, executing the same motions and rhythms will be effortless! In short, it allows you to refine your technique and address any inconsistencies in your playing. By focusing on executing each stroke with precision and clarity, you will develop greater control and finesse, resulting in more articulate and accurate bass drum patterns.

Motion Exercises for Springless Practice:

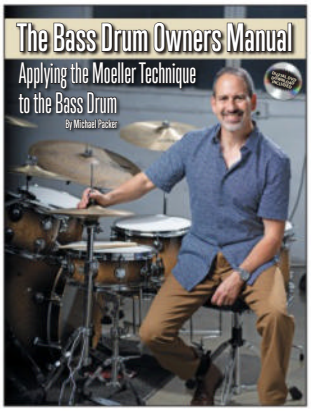
Let's work on the two most used motions, the prep motion, and the leg stroke.

The Prep Motion

The first (and possibly most important) exercise I have my students practice is a prep motion. It's the first step and the primary building block for every other motion involving the lifting of the leg. To do this, take the spring off your pedal. Rest your foot on the pedal with your toes on the sweet spot and your heel on the ground or heel plate. Take the beater and rest it on the top of your foot. Next, raise your thigh as if you are preparing to strike the bass drum. The goal is to do this while the beater remains still and resting on the top of your foot. At first, the beater will likely rise and leave the top of your foot. If this happens, you have too much weight on your toes. To fix this, examine, and adjust your weight distribution so about 5% of your weight is on your toes and 95% of your weight is on your thigh. Continue practicing this until your can execute it several times in a row perfectly with the beater remaining still and on the top of your foot.

The Leg Stroke

Next, we'll continue and play a leg stroke. Fortunately, we've already worked on the prep motion which is the first part of the leg stroke. So, to begin, place your foot on the pedal with your toes resting on the sweet spot and your heel on the ground or heel plate. Place the beater on the top of your foot. Raise your thigh while keeping the beater on the top of your foot. Once your thigh is parallel to the ground and contains about 95% of your legs weight, drop your heel to the ground or heel plate. When you do this, you will transfer the weight from your thigh to your heel. As a result, the beater will fly off the top of your foot and strike the bass drum head. If your weight distribution is correct, the beater will rebound off the head and end up on the top of your foot, where it started.



If you have trouble with this, likely the beater will:

A. Not rebound off the bass drum head

B. Rebound off the bass drum head but stop short of resting on the top of your foot

If either of these issues are happening for you, they are because your weight distribution is not correct. If the beater doesn't rebound off the head, you have too much weight on your toes and you've stopped the rebound. If the beater does rebound off the head but it stops short of resting on the top of your foot, you still have too much weight on your toes.

In either scenario, after you strike the drum, you must transfer 95% of your weight from your thigh to your heel while keeping the remaining 5% on your toes. It's tricky but once you can execute on a springless pedal, it will be effortless once you put the spring back on.

Practicing bass drum techniques on a springless pedal can be a transformative experience as you refine your bass drum techniques and unlock the control, accuracy, and power you've been striving for. By embracing this unconventional method, you will enhance your overall proficiency, ultimately elevating your drumming to the next level. So, why not take the leap and explore the world of springless practice? Your bass drum technique will thank you for it, I promise!

The concepts discussed in this article can be studied further in Mike's book *The Bass Drum Owner's Manual,* available through *Modern Drummer* Publications and the *Drum Channel Method,* available at **Drumchannel.com** and Hudson Music. To contact Mike directly, visit **www.mikepackerdrums.com**.

Check out Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com

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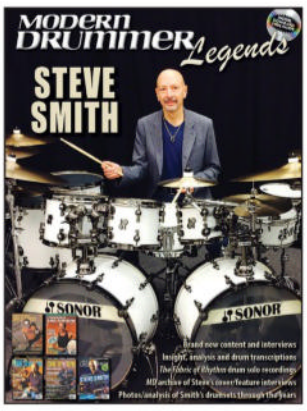

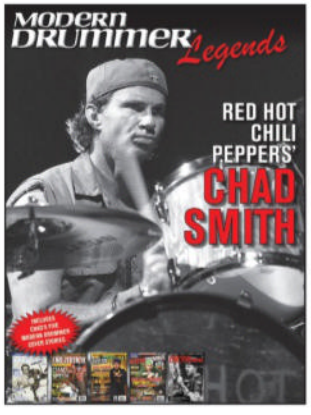

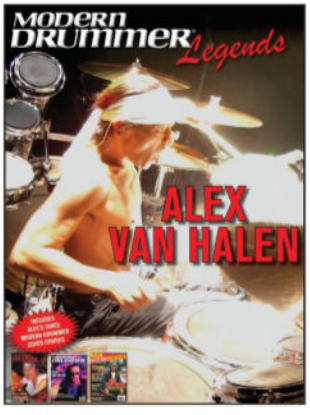

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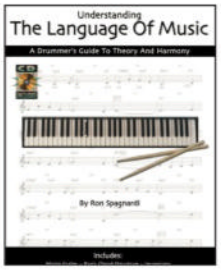
Understanding the Language of Music

Diatonic Harmony

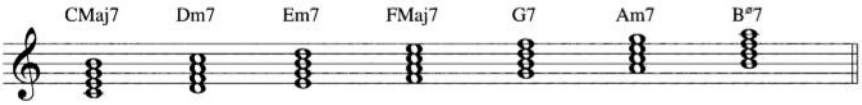
By Ron Spagnardi



This month we will be building upon the subjects of the last three articles: 6th and 7th Chords, Form and Structure, and Roman Numerals and the Circle of Fifths. Diatonic Harmony is based around the chords that fall within the key. The opposite of Diatonic Harmony is Chromatic Harmony, that is when you use notes within a chord that aren't in the key and don't appear within the scale. This happens quite often in all musical styles. But let's not get ahead of ourselves, we'll deal with that later. This month is all about Diatonic Harmony.

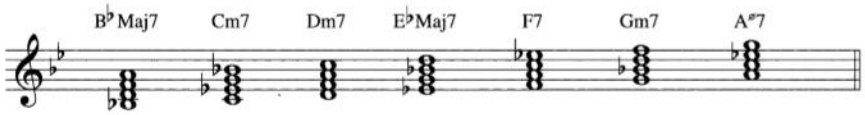
I advise taking this month's subject of Diatonic Harmony, and relating it back to the previous three articles in this series. Each article (or subject) is part of a much bigger picture. Connecting the subjects, and finding where those subjects intersect, will help in your overall understanding of the language of music.

The term diatonic harmony refers to the chords associated with a particular scale or key. The most common way to build these chords is to stack 3rds from each degree of the scale. The example below shows what happens when we stack 3rds and build 7th chords on every note of the C major scale.



Notice, in the example above, the *type* of chord built on each degree of the scale. The C and F chords are major 7ths. The D, E, and A chords are minor 7ths. The G chord is a dominant 7th. And B is a half-diminished 7th.

Be aware that the chord type (major, minor, dominant, or diminished) *remains the same* in every major key. For example, in the key of B♭, the same chord type pattern occurs. Here the B♭ and E♭ chords are major 7ths. The C, D, and G chords are minor 7ths. The F chord is a dominant 7th, and A is a half-diminished 7th.

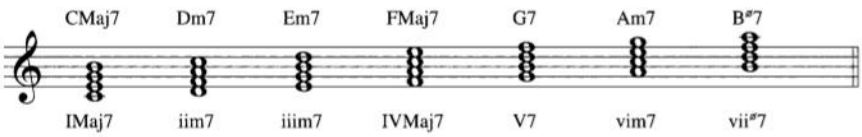


Upper- And Lower-Case Roman Numerals

Now let's bring the Roman numeral system we learned back into the picture. Look at the example below. Notice that *upper-case* Roman numerals are used for the major 7th and dominant 7th chords (I, IV, and V), while *lower-case* numerals are designated for the minor 7th and half-diminished 7th chords (ii, iii, vi, and vii).

I Major
ii minor 7th
iii minor 7th
IV Major 7th
V Dominant 7th
vi minor 7th
vii diminished 7th

Here's what it looks like when we place Roman numerals beneath the diatonic chords of the C scale.

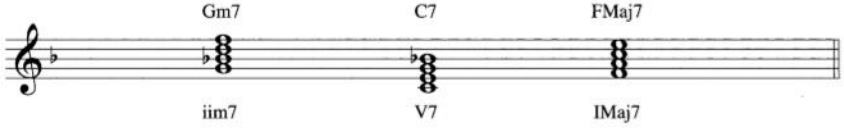


The following are the diatonic 7th chords in each of the twelve major keys. Once again, notice that all the I and IV chords are major 7ths, the ii, iii, and vi chords are minor 7ths, the V chords are dominant, and all the vii chords are half-diminished 7ths. Practice all the chords on the chart in every key.

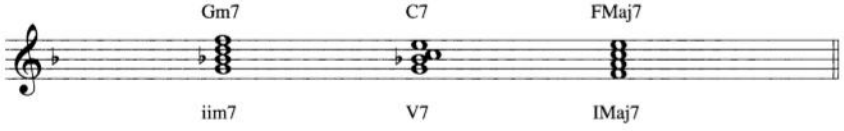
Key	IMaj7	iim7	iiim7	IVMaj7	V7	vim7	viiø7
C	CMaj7	Dmin7	Emin7	FMaj7	G7	Amin7	B^{ø}7
G	GMaj7	Amin7	Bmin7	CMaj7	D7	Emin7	F$^{♯ø}$7
D	DMaj7	Emin7	F$^{♯}$min7	GMaj7	A7	Bmin7	C$^{♯ø}$7
A	AMaj7	Bmin7	C$^{♯}$min7	DMaj7	E7	F$^{♯}$min7	G$^{♯ø}$7
E	EMaj7	F$^{♯}$min7	G$^{♯}$min7	AMaj7	B7	C$^{♯}$min7	D$^{♯ø}$7
B	BMaj7	C$^{♯}$min7	D$^{♯}$min7	EMaj7	F$^{♯}$7	G$^{♯}$min7	A$^{♯ø}$7
G$^{♭}$	G$^{♭}$Maj7	A$^{♭}$min7	B$^{♭}$min7	C$^{♭}$Maj7	D$^{♭}$7	E$^{♭}$min7	F^{ø}7
D$^{♭}$	D$^{♭}$Maj7	E$^{♭}$min7	Fmin7	G$^{♭}$Maj7	A$^{♭}$7	B$^{♭}$min7	C^{ø}7
A$^{♭}$	A$^{♭}$Maj7	B$^{♭}$min7	Cmin7	D$^{♭}$Maj7	E$^{♭}$7	Fmin7	G^{ø}7
E$^{♭}$	E$^{♭}$Maj7	Fmin7	Gmin7	A$^{♭}$Maj7	B$^{♭}$7	Cmin7	D^{ø}7
B$^{♭}$	B$^{♭}$Maj7	Cmin7	Dmin7	E$^{♭}$Maj7	F7	Gmin7	A^{ø}7
F	FMaj7	Gmin7	Amin7	B$^{♭}$Maj7	C7	Dmin7	E^{ø}7

The iim7, V7, IMaj7 Progression

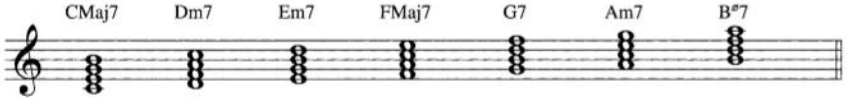
The iim7, V7, IMaj7 is a common chord progression in numerous musical styles, and you should be familiar with it. Let's see what this progression (in root position) would look and sound like in the key of F.



The following is the same progression using *inversions*. Notice the improved sound when notes move in closer proximity to one another, rather then in wide, awkward leaps. This is called smooth voice leading.

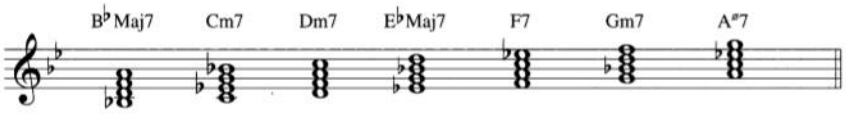


The term diatonic harmony refers to the chords associated with a particular scale or key. The most common way to build these chords is to stack 3rds from each degree of the scale. The example below shows what happens when we stack 3rds and build 7th chords on every note of the C major scale.



Notice, in the example above, the *type* of chord built on each degree of the scale. The C and F chords are major 7ths. The D, E, and A chords are minor 7ths. The G chord is a dominant 7th. And B is a half-diminished 7th.

Be aware that the chord type (major, minor, dominant, or diminished) *remains the same* in every major key. For example, in the key of B$^{♭}$, the same chord type pattern occurs. Here the B$^{♭}$ and E$^{♭}$ chords are major 7ths. The C, D, and G chords are minor 7ths. The F chord is a dominant 7th, and A is a half-diminished 7th.



Upper- And Lower-Case Roman Numerals

Now let's bring the Roman numeral system we learned back into the picture. Look at the example below. Notice that *upper-case* chords (I, IV, and V), while *lower-case* numerals are designated for the minor 7th and half-diminished 7th chords (ii, iii, vi, and vii).

Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Understanding the Language of Music* at moderndrummer.com

The Bobby Rock Peavey "Renaissance" aka. "Sistine Chapel" Kit

By Mark Griffith

Derl Maxwell is a lifelong drummer who has earned the reputation around the Southeast as the "hat drummer." While he has a love/hate relationship with his reputation of entertaining people with drum tricks, faces, antics, and unique hats while he's playing, he loves the fact that people are entertained by his drumming. But he is proudest of his drumming and musical skills, his timekeeping, and a *specific* Peavey drum set that he owns and treasures.

Derl comes from a musical family, and began playing in a family band, and his father was a Peavey fanatic. The family band's gear was entirely Peavey made; from the PA and the guitars down to the mic's, picks, and the cables, all they used was Peavey. Therefore, when his father first saw Peavey drums in 1995, he became insistent that Derl check out the drums and play them with the band. Derl checked out a black marine pearl Peavey Radial Pro kit at a local store in Macon, GA and he thought the kit was, "The ugliest thing I've seen in my entire life." But curiosity set in, and Derl played one note on the bass drum. After that single note, he bought the kit and took it home. That was the day that Derl became a Peavey Drum fanatic. He loved how the thin shells (about 1/8 inch thick) resonated, and in time he even got used to the unusual appearance of the drums. His passion and love of music and drumming has turned him into a drum collector, and he now has between 30 and 40 sets in his collection. But the Peavey drums are closest to his heart.

Several Peavey kit's later, Derl saw an opportunity on eBay to buy Bobby Rock's Peavey Renaissance (also known as the Sistine Chapel) Kit from drummer and drum tech Jason Sullivan. In the world of Peavey drum collecting, this is THE holy grail kit. Unfortunately, that opportunity fell through, but Derl made up his mind that if he *ever* had another opportunity to buy that kit, he wouldn't let it slip through his fingers again. Ten years later, Derl and Jason reconnected on the Facebook Peavey drum group, Jason was again thinking of selling the

kit. After a month of negotiations, they struck up a deal. Derl decided to do his due diligence and contacted Bobby Rock to make sure that the drums hadn't been stolen, and that it was OK to buy the drums. Bobby told him that Jason was his one-time drum-tech and that he had sold the drums to Jason, and there were no issues with Derl purchasing the kit. In fact, Bobby was happy that these drums would be played and seen and wouldn't become a "case queen" kit.

However, there was a slight problem. Jason and the drums were in Odessa, Texas and Derl was in central Georgia.

There was 1200 miles between Derl Maxwell and the drums. Derl's deep respect for the work that (drum designer) Steven Vlopp had put into Peavey drums, and the work that John Douglas had spent hand painting these drums, demanded that Jason and Derl not risk shipping the drums. Furthermore, the fragility of the drums and the fact that these hand-painted drums are one of a kind and irreplaceable— also meant not taking the inherent risk of having the drums shipped to him. Derl decided to make the 2400-mile-round-trip drive, cash in hand, to pick up the drums and bring them to their new home. 60 hours later, Derl returned home to Georgia with The Bobby Rock Peavey Renaissance-Sistine Chapel Kit, built in 1994, and custom painted by John Douglas. The drum set consists of two 24" bass drums, two 26" bass drums, 10, 12, 14, rack toms, 16 and 18 inch floor toms, and a 13" snare drum. Derl has taken great care of this kit while playing it in the ensuing years. Many collectors are very meticulous about their drums. Derl Maxwell is no different.

But that is only part of the story behind this iconic kit. What about the custom Sistine Chapel artwork? That was done by legendary custom drum painter

John Douglas. John has done custom artwork for many drummers including ZZ Top's Frank Beard, Alex Van Halen, and Joey Kramer of Aerosmith. The artwork was done freehand, and every image on the drums comes directly from Michelangelo's masterpiece on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. When you look at these drums up-close, the detail that John did in the marbelization of the finish is breathtaking, and the image's detail is awe-inspiring. But why have a drum set with The Sistine Chapel painted on it? According to Derl, "Bobby was big into Zen philosophy, being a vegetarian, and developing a stronger mind-body-spirit philosophy in life, which he still follows and teaches today. That is where the inspiration came from. Bobby also has a deep appreciation for art, so the Sistine Chapel art made perfect sense."

With all of the time and effort that Derl put into acquiring this kit, you might be surprised to know that he is no longer in possession of the kit. He still owns the set, but the kit resides at the Modern Drummer Museum in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Derl explains, "I was in the process of buying and selling a couple of yellow Peavey kits, and Mike Eckert from Atlanta Drums introduced me to Modern Drummer CEO and Publisher David Frangioni. David and I became friendly, and he told me about his foundation and the Modern Drummer Museum. David is also a collector, and he told me that he had followed the whereabouts of the Sistine Chapel kit but had lost track of it. David asked me if I would be willing to put the drums on display at the MD museum. At that point, I had been playing that amazing yellow Peavey kit for a while, and the Sistine Chapel drums were not being played much, and I felt bad about that. Years earlier, Bobby Rock and I had discussed how this kit deserved to be out in the public being appreciated, played, and putting smiles on people's faces. So, I decided to bring (not ship) the kit down to the Modern Drummer Museum. In the ensuing years, David Frangioni has been able to obtain a COA from John for the kit."

Derl has a reverent tone in his voice when he talks about these drums, "The Peavey drums, and this kit in particular are so special, not only is the design unique, but they sound amazing! Additionally, Peavey only ever made four 26" bass drums. Bobby had two on a natural kit that Peavey first produced for him, and there are the two on this kit. It is an understatement to say that John Douglas' custom artwork is special, it must be seen in person to be appreciated. I'm not sure if Bobby actually played these drums with The Vinnie Vincent Invasion, Nelson, or Slaughter but that's not important to me. However, there is one video on YouTube of Bobby playing this kit with a small jazz trio. These drums are real survivors. In 1996, Bobby used these drums in a lot of drum clinics. He was touring with this kit, and they were travelling in an RV with a trailer when the driver fell asleep. They ran off the road, the RV flipped, the trailer was broken open and the drums (in road cases) were flung everywhere. Luckily, the drums survived without a scratch except for a slightly bent top rim on the snare drum."

Modern Drummer wants to thank Derl Maxwell for preserving this unique and iconic kit for the last 15 years. We are honored to display it at the Modern Drummer Museum. It began its life inspiring drummers at Bobby Rock drum clinics, it continued to inspire drummers that have seen it at Derl's collection and and on stage with his band, it continued to inspire people at the many Peavey drum events in which it appeared. Now it is inspiring everyone who sees it at the Modern Drummer Museum in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

OUT NOW!

Modern Drummer is spotlighting new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. This column is not restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Larnell Lewis

Slice of Life
Larnell Lewis drums
Rosendo "Chendy" Leon percussion
Self-produced

Slice of Life is the follow up to Larnell's debut solo recording (*In the Moment*.) On *Slice of Life*, the Snarky Puppy drummer Larnell Lewis gives up a heartfelt musical insight into a slice of his life. The Toronto drummer offers some Caribbean influences via the steel pans played by Joy Lapps, some beautiful lyrical pop on "All The Stars," and some good-time funky grooves. As one of the most influential drummers on the scene right now, Larnell's drumming approach is well known, but it is nice to hear more of his musical identity come to the forefront. Larnell's bass playing (on one track,) keyboard playing, and programming (on one track) further complete the portrait of this influential musician. This is a really enjoyable record! Larnell's compositions are memorable and catchy without being saccharine. Dare I say that the song "To Forgive" is almost Sting-like. The solo drumming on "Hiding Place" against a backdrop of a field recording of rain is beautiful, and exactly what we all expect from Larnell. Hit "play" and get ready to smile, groove, and dance. Larnell provides all the inspiration you'll need.

Peter Erskine and the JAM Music Lab All-Stars

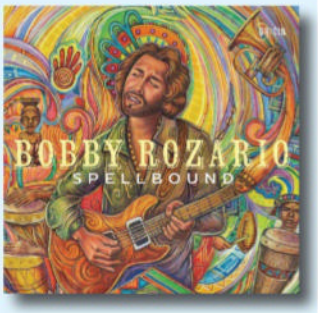
Bernstein in Vienna
Peter Erskine drums
Origin Music

I asked the question while Peter and I were writing his *Legends* book, and I'll ask it again… Has Peter Erskine ever made a bad recording? Recently Peter has been talking in his *Modern Drummer* Jazz Insights column about playing big rooms (and studios) that might present a difficulty for other drummers; so when I saw that Bernstein in Vienna was done in a large concert hall and on (of all things) a Schagerl Brass drum set, I was very intrigued. How would Peter deal with the circumstances of playing a brass drum set in a big concert hall? The answer, *masterfully* as always! The fact that he is playing beautiful arrangements of Leonard Bernstein music makes this recording all the more special. For us drummers, we can all sit back and enjoy Peter's beautiful touch on the instrument. Peter gives a clinic in touch and getting one's own sound from this completely (foreign) brass drum set. Take the opportunity to appreciate that wonderful sound of the tip of Peter's stick hitting the ride cymbal, and that Zildjian (Mel Lewis influenced) Swish Knocker on the tune "It's Love" That distinctive sound provides no question as to where the time is. And that perfect cross-stick on "Cool" is just well-balanced and played, Alvin Stoller would be proud. And while we're listening to "Cool" check out Peter's nice drum solo played over a walking bass line. The unique instrumentation of rhythm section with guitar, saxophone, harmonica, and violin provides a nice change of (musical) pace. Great arrangements of classic music, and perfectly tasteful playing from one and all— what more could anyone want?

Bobby Rozario

Spellbound
Robby Ameen (10 tracks) Dennis Chambers (4 tracks) drums
NII Star, Mauricio Herrera, Camilo Molina, percussion
Origin Records

This is a very ambitious record, and please don't assume that you know what to expect when you see that a guitarist is leading a band with a lot of Latin percussion players. Guitarist, composer, arranger, and producer Bobby Rozario has put together a very special and original project and created some wonderful music. Rozario and *Spellbound* lean much closer to Mahavishnu than "Black Magic Woman." We all know what Dennis Chambers is capable of, he is a drumming legend, and he sounds great on *Spellbound*. So you can imagine how strange it is to say that drummer Robby Ameen steals the show on *Spellbound*, he absolutely kills this music, just listen to "Stronger Together." And according to the liner notes Ameen had a strong hand in the rhythm arrangements as well. I am a huge fan of double drumming (two drummers playing at the same time) and this is a drumming magazine, so I must call special attention to the fact that Dennis Chambers and Robby Ameen are double drumming (with Mauricio Herrera also playing congas) on "Carmen's Lover" and "Beat The Devil." They even trade on both songs. Can you imagine trading with Dennis Chambers? I can't even recall any other examples of Dennis double drumming on another record. Kudos Robby, Dennis and most of all Bobby Rozario!



Rachel Z

Sensual
Omar Hakim drums
Mino Cinelu percussion
Dot Time Records

In Rachel Z's celebration of her (and my) musical hero Wayne Shorter, Rachel Z called on one of the most well-rounded drummers alive, (who just happens to be her husband) Omar Hakim, and percussion genius Mino Cinelu to help her weave a sensual musical tapestry, and that's what they did. In fact, the way Omar solos around the phrases in "What I Fear" fits the music so well it's almost like listening to Wayne Shorter play drums. Omar and Mino don't play on any of the same tracks, and we get to hear Mino's wonderful and unique brand of morphing a percussion and drumset approach. This is a trio (actually two different trios) that defy genre. This is on full display on the version of the Foo Fighters tune "These Days" (my favorite track from my favorite Foo's record,) WOW! Listen to Omar's solo on the closing vamp on "These Days" and "What About the Kids?" Bassist Tony Levin guests on the track "Sensual" as only he can, and bassists Matt Penman and Jonathan Toscano alternate on the rest of tracks. "What About the Kids?" sounds like a tune that Rachel Z could have arranged for Wayne Shorter's *High Life* record (another all-time favorite of mine.) I'll be listening to this record for a long time.

Willy Rodriguez

Seeing Sounds
Willie Rodriguez drums
Coucs Music

Combine a drummer that has played with The Mars Volta, Latin Grammy winner Mon Laferte, and legendary saxophonist Dave Liebman, and who do you get? Willy Rodriguez of course! And on Rodriguez's new CD *Seeing Sounds*, when the quintet of Rodriguez, pianist Leo Genovese, bassist John Hebert, trumpeter Jason Palmer, and saxophonist Hery Paz get going (augmented twice on the CD by Dave Liebman) you are really in for something special. The track "Fixed Goal" sounds like it came directly from Ornette Coleman's classic 1958 recording *Something Else*. The electronic sound design augmented drum solo track of "The Red-tailed Hawk is Going to Eat Your Babies" is a nice meeting of old and new. And on the closer, "Praise" Rodriguez celebrates the spirit and deep influential impact of drummers Ralph Peterson Jr. and Bob Gullotti. Sometimes I wonder how drummers with such a strong concept as Willy Rodriguez can slip under the radar for so long. With *Seeing Sounds* Willy Rodriguez is under the radar no more!

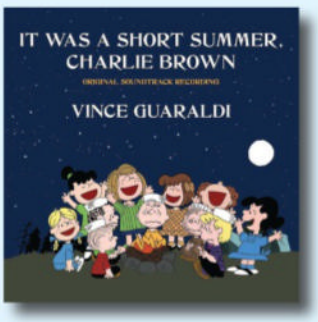
Today Was Yesterday

Today Was Yesterday
Ty Dennis drums
Mascot Music

Before Ty Dennis' feature in *Modern Drummer* last year, I hadn't heard of him, but his teaming with Angelo Barbera to create the band *Today Was Yesterday* is a breath of fresh musical air. The band is melodic and slightly proggy, maybe like a lighter Porcupine Tree. When I flipped the CD case to see that guitarist Alex Lifeson guests on almost every track, and Robby Krieger guests on a track as well, I must admit I was very excited to hit play. When I did the song "Grace" jumped out of the speakers, I smiled from ear to ear. This is the type of band that gives me hope for the future of real rock music. Barbera is a good singer with a pleasant voice with a nice amount of rasp. Ty Dennis is grooving hard through the songs where maybe others might have leaned on drumming pyrotechnics. However, there is some very slick drumming woven into these high-quality performances. And the songs themselves are top shelf. Listen to the driving groove on "My Dog is My God," through the thickly layered guitar parts. Need we mention that every time Alex Lifeson solos, he lifts the proceedings to a new level. He might be the perfect guitarist to guest on the recording. But then you hear the slinky "If I Fall (Silly Games)" with Robby Krieger, marvel at the versatility of everyone in this band and on this CD.

Vince Guaraldi

It Was a Short Summer, Charlie Brown
Jack Sperling drums
LMFP Productions



Jack Sperling is a forgotten drummer who credits include Glenn Miller, Les Brown, Frank Sinatra, Henry Mancini, Elvis Presley, and James Brown. He was also a pioneer of the double bass drums. However, he went uncredited on (probably) hundreds of recording sessions. Therefore, when I happen upon a "new" (reissued) release that lists Jack Sperling as the drummer I pay attention. Jack Sperling paved the way for so many of us that wanted to do it all. Although pianist Vince Guaraldi is in firm control of these compositions and this music, Jack Sperling is driving the bus (*or steering the canoe if you will*.) Let Jack's superb and professional playing on this record inspire you to investigate the far-reaching career of one of drum history's most overlooked drummers. Like other Guaraldi Charlie Brown soundtrack records featuring great drummers like Colin Bailey and Mike Clark, this music was everywhere and influencing a lot of today's drummers when they were kids. And it's nice to hear it again.

John Bishop

Antwerp
John Bishop drums
Origin Records

John Bishop's new recording is outstanding. For reference it has the feel of a more aggressive Bill Evans trio, with all the elasticity and interaction that Evans and his trio's were known for. Pianist Bram Weijters, and bassist Piet Verbist are among Europe's best, and this trio gels and swings together as one musical mind and concept. Listen to their collective improvisation on "For Less Than Nothing." The trio is playing mostly original music, with the exception of a Carla Bley composition, a Hal Galper song, and a Henry Mancini tune. And that last phrase might say it all. John Bishop's trio has found a voice somewhere between Henry Mancini and Carla Bley. It's a space where masterful modern piano trios live, Corea, Hancock, Jarrett. Add this trio to the list, congrats to drummer John Bishop, you have put together quite a trio, and an even better recording. In its concept, sound, and playing, *Antwerp* is a fantastic record.

Shelly Manne & His Men

Jazz From the Pacific Northwest
Shelly Manne drums
Reel to Real Records

If you have noticed that for the last few months that *Modern Drummer* has been on a bit of a Shelly Manne kick, we have. And this is the recording that sparked that theme. For the last few years Reel to Real records has been releasing unreleased live recordings of the jazz masters of the past. Their latest is this Shelly Manne gem. The two amazing CD's in the set were recorded in 1958 and 1966, and show Shelly at the top of his game. The recordings are mixed, mastered, and restored ,to perfection. The insightful liner notes that talk of Shelly's vast influence and importance from Jim Keltner, Peter Erskine, and Joe LaBarbera, make the collection even more special. This is a unique opportunity to compare and contrast the playing and concept of a master nearly 10 years apart. To detail Shelly's drumming and musical highlights on this release would take an entire issue of *Modern Drummer,* instead just listen to the recording and remember these quotes from the masters, Joe LaBarbera says, "We were all influenced by him," Peter Erskine calls Shelly, "A Sound Colorist," and Jim Keltner states, "I wanted to sound like him." That says it all.

John LaBarbera Big Band

Grooveyard
Joe LaBarbera drums
Kiko Sebrian percussion
Origin Records

The LaBarabera brothers (John, arranger; Pat, tenor saxophonist; and Joe, drummer) are musical legends, they have all built long careers and deserve our appreciation. They have all come together under John's baton to play his arrangements on *Grooveyard*. But this isn't *just* a family affair, saxophonist Steve Wilson, pianist Renee Rosnes, and bassist Rufus Reid, also make their strong presences felt. It's a wonderful modern big band recording, and (as always) Joe LaBarbera is driving the bus with taste, chops, and all the right notes. Check out Joe's amazing playing on "My New Summer Samba," how LaBarbera's brushes drive the beginning of Dave Brubeck's "For Iola," and his power on "Tranesome" and Elvin Jones' "Keiko's Birthday March." This is a superb big band recording.

Koppel, Blade, Koppel

Time Again
Brian Blade drums
Cowbell Music

When we drummers play music, there are adjustments to be made depending on the instrumentation of the band we are playing with. We would not play in a piano trio the same way as we would in a big band, and the adjustments don't stop there. We have not heard Brian Blade playing in an organ trio much, let alone the instrumentation of saxophone, organ, and drums. There is an adjustment to be made by a drummer when playing with a Hammond organist as opposed to a bassist, and Brian makes this adjustment perfectly. Benjamin Koppel's alto saxophone is both swinging and deeply soulful. Organist Anders Koppel's Hammond playing is outstanding. His basslines are stable, his comping is richly harmonic, and his solos are exciting. Benjamin Koppel and Brian Blade have worked and recorded together quite often, but this CD is a standout, and the reason it stands out is because it's different. From the beginning of "Puerto Rican Rumble" I thought I knew where this band was going. The soulfulness of "If You Forget Me" took me by complete surprise. With "Bazaar Revisited" we take yet another unexpected musical turn, and we get a rumbling and dynamic drum solo that seems to come out of nowhere. The solo simply evolves right before your eyes (actually ears,) and segues into a romping ensemble performance, and then another drum solo at the end that brings us into a solo that leads us to where we began. Old school rapper Al Agami provides yet another cool surprise that REALLY works! There are many musical surprises on *Time Again*, and that often makes for great music, this CD is no different.

Josh Nelson

LA Stories: Live at Sam First
Dan Schnelle drums
Sam First Records (LP and download only)

Josh Nelson's live record is a unique love letter to LA, and in this musical letter, he tells us about the history of Los Angeles and a lot about himself. *LA Stories* features LA drummer Dan Schnelle who should be better known in the drumming world. He is creative, and he has a strong groove in any of the genres he plays. He floats and drives hard at different times, and he does both of them very well. He plays Nelson's arrangements and compositions well, never demanding attention, while possessing the strength to steer the music, all while supporting the band very well. Saxophonist Walter Smith III shines on this entire record, as does LA jazz veteran guitarist Larry Koonse. In 2022, drummer Dan Schnelle also released his long-awaited debut record as a leader called *Shine Thru*. But *LA Stories* is a nice recording.

Ornette Coleman

Tomorrow is the Question
Shelly Manne drums
Contemporary-Craft Records (LP Audiophile Reissue)

As you can probably surmise by now, Shelly Manne made a lot of records for Contemporary records, Shelly was a pro's pro. He could do anything. For a while Shelly was under contract and recorded exclusively for Contemporary. Some people didn't (and don't) associate Shelly with the avant-garde (or free) approach. However, Shelly was excited to play with Ornette, Shelly said about this experience," I don't feel I'm actually playing a song. I'm really playing *with* a person. I'm playing *his* song… Ornette does something with his own tunes that makes you not only hear the tunes but makes you hear them like eighteen hundred thousand different ways." Shelly Manne played with Ornette differently, and he brought different things out of Ornette, and it worked. Manne would later record with another free thinker in Jimmy Giuffre, and on Shelly's own recording *The Three and The Two*. *Tomorrow is the Question* is a very good record, and this is a good sounding LP.

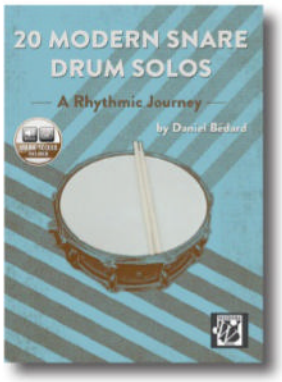
Dave Schumacher & Cubeye

Smoke in the Sky
Joel Mateo drums
Mauricio Herrera percussion
Cellar Records

On *Smoke in the Sky*, his fourth recording as a bandleader, Baritone saxophonist Dave Schumacher brings a long musical resume' to his band Cubeye. He paid his dues with Lionel Hampton, for the next 20 years he moved on to Harry Connick Jr.'s big band, and has since played with Tom Harrell and T.S. Monk. With his band Cubeye, Schumacher seems to be picking up right where influential Jerry Gonzalez & The Fort Apache Band left off. And he has assembled just the right band to do just that. Drummer Joel Mateo and percussionist work perfectly together, sometimes I can't tell who is playing what. It truly sounds like one musician with four arms and four legs, they have a sympatico that is astonishing, subtle, and telepathic. Check out their playing together on "Caridad." Joel takes a nice solo on "El Dilema de Chegui Metralla," and Mauricio takes an equally nice solo on "Poincina." In fact, check out the entire band's amazing groove on "Poinciana." This is a great band to continue the long New York tradition of a small group fusing jazz and Afro Cuban music.

20 Modern Snare Drum Solos, A Rhythmic Journey

By Daniel Bedard
Wizdom Media



This new book is a very needed addition to the modern snare drum canon. It is written for those of us that have been going through the snare drum repertoire for most of our lives. After our initial lessons, we have spent years on Podemski, sight read Ron Spagnardi's books, had the rudimental knowledge ingrained by Alan Dawson's "Ritual," taken the time to have our rudimental knowledge solidified by Wilcoxon, been driven to the practice room by Anthony Cirone and Mitchel Peters, and taken years to digest the harder Chaffee pieces. So what's next? THIS book by Daniel Bedard. Daniel has collected all the vocabulary from the above and written 20 well-conceived pieces of snare drum MUSIC. The pieces will be a worthwhile challenge for any intermediate drummer getting ready for a life in percussion. They will also be a challenge for any advanced drummer who has gone through all the above-mentioned books. I must also applaud Daniel for his chapter on applying sections of every piece to the drumset for both groove and solo vocabulary. This is a wonderful idea and a great addition to this book. A few of the solos *might* be sight readable challenges for some, but most of them will be commitments to decipher, study, attack in sections, and PRACTICE. Hold all my calls, I'll be in my practice room for the next few years with *20 Modern Snare Drum Solos… ignore the screaming*. Thanks Daniel!

Marcelo Novati's Juanes Touring Kit

Photos by Jason Mehler

Drums: DW Collectors (Maple SSC) in broken glass finish - 18x22 Bass Drum, 10x13 rack tom, 16x16 floor tom, 6 1/2x14 brass snare, 6x12 maple snare in tiger oyster finish (side snare.)
Heads: Evans drumheads - Bass Drums: 22 HEAVYWEIGHT clear with DW muffling pillows. Rack and floor toms: UV2 on top, G1 clear on bottoms. Main snare: HD DRY coated on top, Hazy 300 clear on bottom. Side snare: G1 coated on top, Hazy 300 on bottom

Cymbals: Zildjian (from left to right) – 14" Fat Hats Hi-hat, 20" K Paper Thin Crash, 22" K Custom Dark Ride, 20" K Paper Thin Crash, 21" K Paper Thin Crash.
Hardware: DW - DW 9000 series 3-leg hi-hat stand, DW 9000 series single bass pedal XF, Four DW 9000 series convertible boom stand for cymbals, Two DW 9000 series snare stand, DW 9000 series snare/tom stand (for rack tom), DW 9000 series throne

Sticks: VIC FIRTH - Marcelo Novati signature model hickory (a heavier 5B)
Microphones: AUSTRIAN AUDIO (not shown in pictures) - OC7 for kick outside, CC8 for snare, OC18 for overheads, OD5 for toms
In Ears: 64 AUDIO - Custom made A12t model
Preamps: HERITAGE AUDIO
Accessories: EVANS - eq pods control gels, HERITAGE AUDIO mixer

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